

#237: JULY 2018 • INDYPENDENT.ORG

THE INDYPENDENT

OCASIO WINS!
NEXT UP...
P5

BATTLE OF THE
GRIFTERS



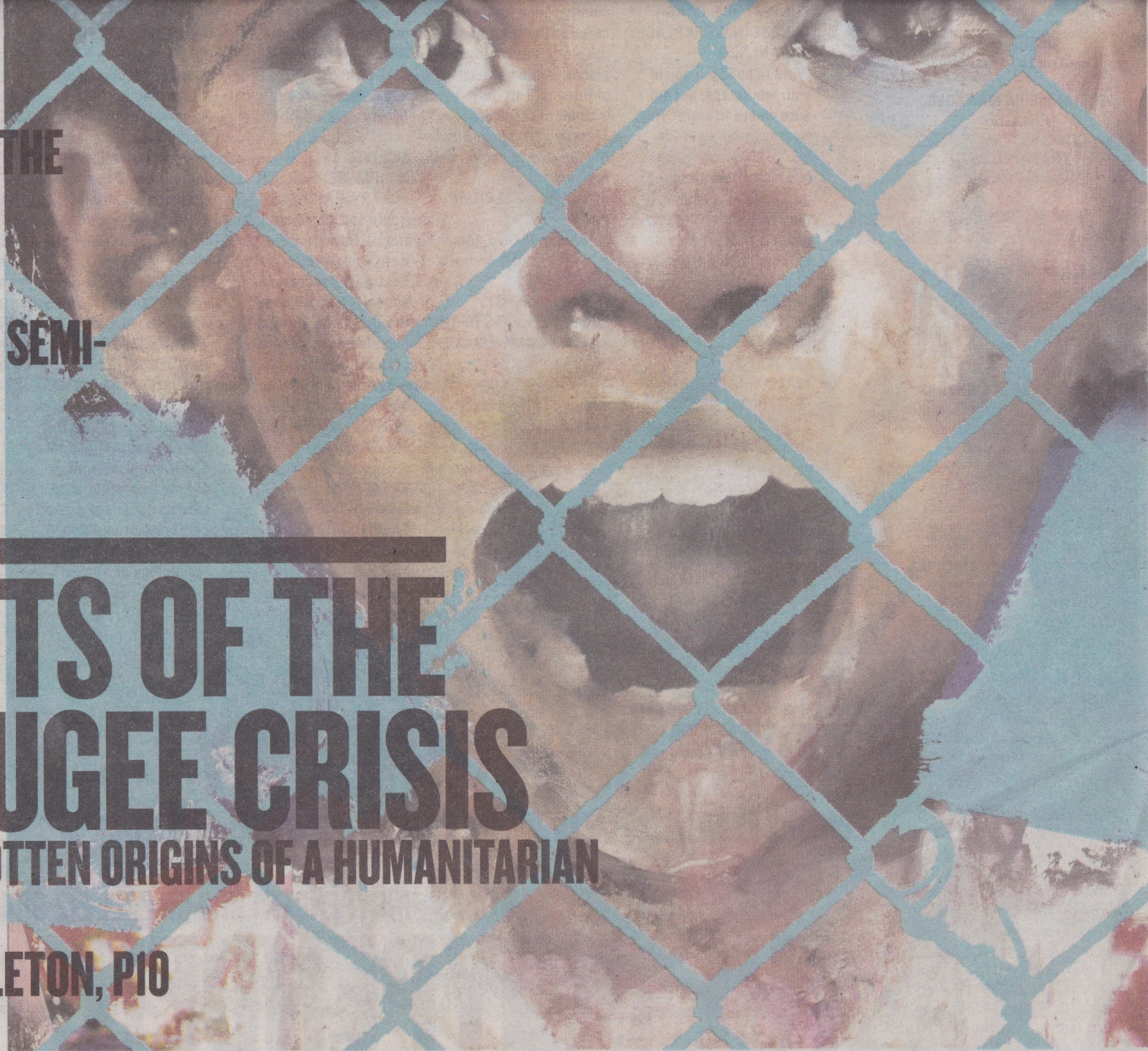
**NEXT UP...
P5**

**BATTLE OF THE
GRIFTERS
P6**

**TALES OF A SEMI-
WRESTLER
P16**

ROOTS OF THE REFUGEE CRISIS

**THE FORGOTTEN ORIGINS OF A HUMANITARIAN
DISASTER
JOHN TARLETON, P10**



DAVID HOLLENBACH



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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

JULY 5–JULY 19

THUs, times vary • \$16
**PERFORMANCE: CUER-
PXS RADICALES: RADI-
CAL BODIES IN PERFOR-
MANCE**

Immerse yourself in new
and recent work by con-
temporary Latinx artists
as they respond to themes
in the exhibition "Radical
Women: Latin American
Art, 1960–1985" on view
until July 22.

BROOKLYN MUSEUM
200 Eastern Pkwy, Bklyn

JULY 7–JULY 8

9AM–5PM SAT & SUN •
\$25 Suggested donation
**CONFERENCE: CRASH
COURSE IN WORKPLACE
ORGANIZING**

Want to build a union in
your workplace, but not
sure where to start? This
two-day training is for
you. Through participa-
tory activities, attendees
gain an understanding of
the stages of an organiz-

MON JULY 9

8:30PM–9:30PM
**PERFORMANCE: AZU-
CAR!**
A variety show featuring
Latinx and Hispanic talent
— stand-up, storytell-
ing, characters, improv,
music.

STARR BAR
214 Starr St., Mnhtn

JULY 11–AUG 29

WEDs 7PM • FREE
FILM: OUTDOOR CINEMA
Curated by Film Forum
and Rooftop Films, the
international festival
highlights Socrates
Sculpture Park as a com-
munity space for the many
cultures that share one of
the world's most diverse
places — the borough
of Queens. This July,
in order of screening:
*Monsoon Wedding, Black
Mother, The Young Girls of
Rocheport.*

**SOCRATES SCULPTURE
PARK**

tions in Britain and the
United States throughout
much of the 1980s and
'90s.

NEW MUSEUM
235 Bowery, Mnhtn

THU JULY 12

7PM–9PM
**SCIENCE: MANHATTAN-
HENGE**
As the Sun sets on July
12, it will be perfectly
aligned with Manhattan's
east-west numbered
streets. Astrophysicist
Jackie Faherty will be
your guide to the astrono-
my behind this fascinating
phenomenon in a special
presentation at the
Hayden Planetarium.
**AMERICAN MUSEUM OF
NATURAL HISTORY**
200 Central Park W.,
Mnhtn

SUN JULY 15

2:30PM–5PM
POETRY: BARG DAY
Poets and musicians pay

This program launches
ICP's new series,
"Dismantling the Gaze,"
which considers looking,
power and visual culture
in the #MeToo moment.
Art historian and popular
culture scholar Maria
Elena Buszek presents
hundreds of years of
visual culture in one
brief presentation that
concisely illustrates the
gendered power struc-
tures deeply embedded in
cultural production.
ICP MUSEUM
250 Bowery, Mnhtn

TUE JULY 17

6:30PM–8:30PM • \$10
**PERFORMANCE: PRO-
FILED**
A space for people to
share their horrible
experiences of racial
profiling with some humor
and for the audience to
learn. Hosted by Marcela
Onyango & Lauren Clark.
CAVEAT
314 Clinton St., Mnhtn

planning in their work.
NEW MUSEUM
235 Bowery, Mnhtn

THU JULY 19

7PM–9PM • \$5–\$15 sug-
gested donations
**HISTORY: HOMEWARD
BOUND: MEMORIES,
IDENTITY AND RESIL-
IENCE ACROSS THE
CHINESE DIASPORA**
Part of a series of public
events that highlight
everyday resilience in
Chinatowns around the
world. Mei Lum, Di-
ane Wong and Huiying
Bernice Chan have spent
the past several years
conducting ethnographic
research and oral history
interviews from New York
to Johannesburg.
WING ON WO & CO.
26 Mott St., Mnhtn

FRI JULY 20

7:30PM–10:30PM • FREE
**MUSIC: ANOUSHKA
SHANKAR/MY BRIGHT-
EST DIAMOND**

Mikael Tarkela

DESIGNERS:

Leia Doran, Anna Gold

SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER:

Elia Gran

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CONFERENCE: CRASH COURSE IN WORKPLACE ORGANIZING

Want to build a union in your workplace, but not sure where to start? This two-day training is for you. Through participatory activities, attendees gain an understanding of the stages of an organizing campaign and mastery of foundational organizing skills.

THE NEW SCHOOL
66 W. 12th St., Mnhtn

SAT JULY 7

10AM–4PM • FREE
FEST: 16TH ANNUAL ARAB STREET FESTIVAL
Food, musical performances and art celebrating the Arab-American and North African cultural heritage.
Great Jones St., Mnhtn

community space for the many cultures that share one of the world's most diverse places — the borough of Queens. This July, in order of screening: *Monsoon Wedding, Black Mother, The Young Girls of Rochefort.*

SOCRATES SCULPTURE PARK
32-01 Vernon Blvd, Queens

THU JULY 12

7PM–8:30PM • \$15
PANEL: LEGACIES OF THE BLACK AUDIO FILM COLLECTIVE
A discussion on the relevance of the Black Audio Film Collective whose lyrical, essayistic films drew upon the work of postcolonial writers, feminist intellectuals and queer theorists to reckon with radically shifting social and political condi-

presentation at the Hayden Planetarium.
AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
200 Central Park W., Mnhtn

SUN JULY 15

2:30PM–5PM
POETRY: BARG DAY
Poets and musicians pay tribute Barbara Barg. Barg was a pre-Socratic, post-postmodern, pre-apocalyptic poet and through these lenses explored writing, music, performance, teaching, the ground, the sky and life in general.
BOWERY POETRY CLUB
308 Bowery, Bklyn

TUE JULY 17

6:30PM–8PM • \$10
TALK: DISMANTLING THE GAZE: A VISUAL PRIMER

6:30PM–8:30PM • \$10
PERFORMANCE: PRO-FILED

A space for people to share their horrible experiences of racial profiling with some humor and for the audience to learn. Hosted by Marcela Onyango & Lauren Clark.
CAVEAT
21A Clinton St., Mnhtn

THU JULY 19

7PM–8:30PM • \$15
ART: SOCIAL FABRIC: THOMAS BAYRLE'S EXPANDED NETWORK
Organized in conjunction with the exhibit "Thomas Bayrle: Playtime" at the New Museum until Sept. 2, this panel will look at how younger voices take up questions around corporate production, political spectacle, digital technology and urban

conducting ethnographic research and oral history interviews from New York to Johannesburg.
WING ON WO & CO.
26 Mott St., Mnhtn

FRI JULY 20

7:30PM–10:30PM • FREE
MUSIC: ANOUSHKA SHANKAR/MY BRIGHT-EST DIAMOND
Melding Indian raga with electronica beats, sitar master Anoushka Shankar honor's tradition while boldly embracing the future. She is joined by indie singer and composer Shara Nova.
BRIC CELEBRATE BROOKLYN FESTIVAL
141 Prospect Park W., Mnhtn

SAT JULY 21

2PM–6PM • FREE
FUNDRAISER: MEOW-

ADVERTISE IN THE INDY

UNIQUE AUDIENCE | AFFORDABLE RATES | PERSONAL ATTENTION

FOR MORE INFORMATION, EMAIL ADS@INDYPENDENT.ORG OR CALL 212-904-1282

THE INDYPENDENT

JULY

MANIA 2018! A CAT PARTY IN BROOKLYN

Cats. They conquered the internet, now they are coming for Brooklyn. Pet them, take selfies with them, have a drink with them, admire their exquisite beauty. Drink proceeds go to local rescues.

PINE BOX ROCK SHOP
12 Grattan St., Bklyn

SUN JULY 22

7PM–9:30PM • FREE
BOOK LAUNCH: FIREBRAND FEMINISM: THE RADICAL LIVES OF TI-GRACE ATKINSON, KATHIE SARACHILD, ROXANNE DUNBAR-ORTIZ & DANA DENS-MORE

Breanne Fahs will read from her new book followed by a discussion of radical feminist tactics and activism in today's political climate.

BLUESTOCKINGS BOOKSTORE
172 Allen St., Mnhtn

TUE JULY 24

7:30PM–10PM • FREE
MUSIC/FILM: RZA: LIVE FROM THE 36TH CHAMBER OF SHADLIN

on Wu-Tang's aesthetic. Now, weaving together instrumentals and beats from the Wu-Tang discography, RZA performs his thrilling new score live.

DAMROSCH PARK
175 W 62nd St., Mnhtn

WED JULY 25

7PM–10PM

SCREENING: *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS* IN 35MM

This thinly-veiled examination of McCarthy Era hysteria follows the story of a Californian doctor who discovers an alien plot to take over the earth by methodically replacing humankind with zombie-like pod people. One of the best political allegories of 1950s.

VILLAGE EAST CINEMA
181–189 2nd Ave, Mnhtn

JULY 28–JULY 29

11AM–6PM • \$0 & up

FESTIVAL: THE 8TH ANNUAL NEW YORK CITY POETRY FESTIVAL

Uniting the vast and diverse New York City poetry community at the idyllic summer paradise of

MEOW! Calling all friends of felines. You will be in cat heaven at this July 21 fundraiser for local rescues.

UNDER THE STARS: Melding

IN THIS ISSUE

FIT TO PRINT, P4

The mayor of Jersey City announced newspaper blackout on Twitter. We fought back.

ALEXANDRIA BEATS GOLIATH, P5

And there are more opportunities to take out establishment Dems coming.

WHO WILL PULL THE LEVERS OF BROOKLYN'S POLITICAL MACHINE?, P6

A turf war is brewing.

IT'S GETTING HOT IN EAST HARLEM, P7

Tenants are turning up the heat on their landlord and their landlord is literally turning up the heat on them.

TOGETHER ACROSS BOARDS, P8

An immigrant family fights for survival in the age of Trump.

THE ROOTS OF THE MIGRANT CRISIS, P10

The children and families locked up in the United States are



Breanne Fahs will read from her new book followed by a discussion of radical feminist tactics and activism in today's political climate.
BLUESTOCKINGS BOOKSTORE
 172 Allen St., Mnhn

TUE JULY 24

7:30PM-10PM • FREE

MUSIC/FILM: RZA: LIVE FROM THE 36TH CHAMBER OF SHAOLIN
 Wu-Tang Clan founder RZA delivers an epic audiovisual film experience — a re-score of the Shaw Brothers' 1978 martial arts classic *The 36th Chamber of Shaolin*. With its themes of perseverance, transcendence and brotherhood, the film was a formative influence

1950s.
VILLAGE EAST CINEMA
 181-189 2nd Ave, Mnhn

JULY 28-JULY 29

11AM-6PM • \$0 & up

FESTIVAL: THE 8TH ANNUAL NEW YORK CITY POETRY FESTIVAL

Uniting the vast and diverse New York City poetry community at the idyllic summer paradise of Governors Island.
COLONEL'S ROW
Governor's Island

MEOW! Calling all friends of felines. You will be in cat heaven at this July 21 fundraiser for local rescues.

UNDER THE STARS: Melding Indian raga with electronica beats, Anousha Shankar will perform July 20 at Prospect Park.



7-6-18

Distributed by Andrews McMeel Syndication
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 TED RALL

on their landlords and their landlord is literally turning up the heat on them.

TOGETHER ACROSS BOARDS, P8

An immigrant family fights for survival in the age of Trump.

THE ROOTS OF THE MIGRANT CRISIS, P10

The children and families locked up in the United States are fleeing the results of U.S. foreign policy.

YOU SHALL KNOW THEM BY THEIR SCARS, P12

Israeli troops target wounded Palestinian youth.

BEAVIS & BUTTHEAD, CHEECH & CHONG... TRUMP & KIM? P13

Only one of these imbecilic duos has nuclear weapons, but there is a road to peace.

DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH, P14

Singer Shea Diamond tells how music helped her survive prison as a trans woman.

AMERICA AGAINST THE ROPES, P16

A look at how our politics has devolved into pro-wrestling plot line.

TRUMP HELP HOTLINE, P18

Our advice columnist offers an apocalyptic yoga meditation.

BEEN DOWN SO LONG IT LOOKS LIKE UP, P18

Two new books explore the fraught politics of NYC's tenements and skyscrapers.

BOYS AT 50, P19

Boys in the Band premiered in 1968, but is this play about the lives of gay men still relevant today?



July 2018 THE INDIPENDENT

JERSEY CITY BOX NEWS VICTORY

BY PETER RUGH

On Monday, June 4, Jersey City Mayor Steven Fulop tweeted that his town was undergoing a newspaper purge. Two hundred and forty newspaper dispensers had been rounded up from the sidewalks, he wrote, with “more to do.” By way of proof, Fulop included in his tweet a photograph of the hundreds of news boxes the city had removed from the street. Eleven days later, however, the blackout had lifted and the newspapers were back — the result of behind-the-scenes legal wrangling by publishers and a public campaign led by this newspaper that saw the arrest of one of its editors, me.

“We were stunned,” said Erik Anders-Nilsson, describing his reaction to the missing news dispensers. Anders-Nilsson, who helps keep our Jersey City box clean and stocked, arrived outside the Five Corners Library on June 5 with bundles of our June issue, only to discover *The Indy* box gone. No *Metro* or *amNew York* boxes were anywhere to be found either. No *El Especialito*. Nada.

“My first thought was maybe some dignitary was coming, someone like Trump, and they’d done a sweep of the street.”



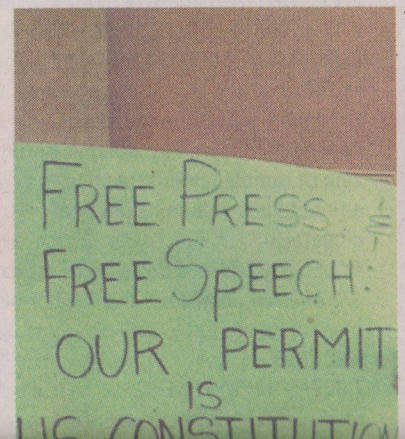
ELIA GRAN

private to win back the dispensers, our staff began raising a public stink over the mayor’s sidewalk despotism. In the process we reached out to multiple prominent and well-funded free speech advocacy groups, including the American Civil Liberties Union. No one picked up on the organization’s New Jersey complaint hotline and an auto-generated response to an email instructed us that we could expect to hear from someone within six weeks. PEN America never got back to us either.

We did, however, succeed in getting word out. WNYC, Gothamist and the *Jersey Journal* ran features on the news box heist and a change.org petition we launched garnered more than 230 signatures.

On June 13, ahead of a City Council meeting where the news boxes were not on the agenda, councilman Michael Yun joined us for a press conference outside of Jersey City Hall. He came to our defense, he said, because his constituents, including many immigrants and low-income residents, depend on newspapers as a “way to get information about the government and the character of their neighbors.”

The press conference was an odd experience for myself and other *Indy* reporters. We’re used to covering the news not making it. It got even weirder when we spotted the mayor in the flesh at a nearby Lupus awareness event. Stepping past someone with a sign reading “Lupus



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“My first thought was maybe some dignitary was coming, someone like Trump, and they’d done a sweep of the street.”

Trump was not in town, although the mayor’s tweet did seem to invite comparisons to The Donald, as John Tarleton, *The Indy*’s editor-in-chief, reflected at the time: “If the President had ordered the removal of hundreds of outdoor news boxes from the streets of an American city, there would be a huge outcry over his violation of the First Amendment. We should feel the same outrage over what Fulop did — and boasted about on Twitter no less!”

The mayor didn’t notify publishers before seizing their property nor, apparently, much of the rest of the city government either.

We made several phone calls, hoping to find out “what the hell was going on,” as Trump might put it, and were passed back and forth between various Jersey City agencies. Monte from the Traffic Department was sympathetic, though there wasn’t much he could do. “It has absolutely nothing to do with Traffic,” he said. “I wasted half a Saturday trying to get a copy of *Especialito* for my girlfriend’s mother. She loves that thing.”

In his tweet, Fulop apologized if the city “accidentally took [a news box] that has permits.” But it turned out there actually was no permitting process to begin with. “We’re working on it,” someone from the Department of Sanitation promised.

Why was Fulop attempting exorcise the news from his town? According to his tweet, “[M]any are non functioning, they clutter the sidewalks, and many just become trash cans.”

A spokeswoman for the mayor, whose office did not respond to multiple requests for comment from *The Indy*, sought to convince other media outlets that the news boxes pose a public safety threat. Yet Fulop’s initial justification won him many accolades. Twitter-user @JCVillageMom wondered if he might go a step further: “Can we also clean up sandwich board clutter at crosswalks?”

First they came for the news boxes, then they came for the sandwich boards?

But in fairness, news dispensers can get pretty grimy. Garbage tends to take the place of newspapers if the containers are neglected. Yet, as Joshua Wueller, legal council for *Newsday*, publishers of *amNew York*, noted in a June 8 letter to the mayor: “[T]he distribution of newspapers via newspaper boxes is protected under the constitutional principles of freedom of speech and the press.” Courts have repeatedly ruled it is reasonable to regulate the presentation and placement of news dispensers but not to ban them out right.

While attorneys for *Newsday*, as well as for *El Especialito*, worked in

org petition we launched garnered more than 230 signatures.

On June 3, ahead of a City Council meeting where the news boxes were not on the agenda, councilman Michael Yun joined us for a press conference outside of Jersey City Hall. He came to our defense, he said, because his constituents, including many immigrants and low-income residents, depend on newspapers as a “way to get information about the government and the character of their neighbors.”

The press conference was an odd experience for myself and other *Indy* reporters. We’re used to covering the news not making it. It got even weirder when we spotted the mayor in the flesh at a nearby Lupus awareness event. Stepping past someone with a sign reading “Lupus Lives Matter,” I waited for Fulop to finish glad-handing so that I could give him a chance to clarify his remark about “permits” and defend himself against accusations of pavement demagogery.

He bolted away. Hollering after him, I asked if I should call the police for the theft.

“Yes,” he said, disappearing through a security checkpoint at the City Hall building.

At the start of a City Council meeting that evening, nearly all present stood to pledge allegiance to flag. The bit about “liberty and justice for all,” seemed more than a bit ridiculous, given that all newsprint had unceremoniously been vacated from the streets only the week before.

“The bastards took our news box,” *Indy* contributing editor Ellen Davidson later reflected. “We weren’t about to let it go down like that.”

When we stood up and loudly demanded the city return all news boxes, four of us were escorted out of the meeting by police: John Tarleton, *Indy* intern Dean Patterson, Davidson and myself. I received the additional honor of being arrested and charged with disorderly conduct.

While I sat handcuffed to a bench in a holding cell at the Eastern Division precinct one of the officers asked me if “this was a planned thing?”

“I figured if this town was going to start taking away newspapers you might as well take reporters too,” I told him. We both had a good chuckle at that one — but it was true. If other politicians began getting ideas from Fulop’s unrepentant authoritarianism, I would have a hard time finding work!

Earlier, at the press conference, we used one of our news boxes as podium and afterward stocked it up and left it behind in front of City Hall as a symbol of resistance to Fulop. By Friday morning, not only was it still there but it had been joined by a bright orange *Metro* box. As we go to press, both remain, fittingly facing a bronze statue of the Roman goddess Victory.

More and more news dispensers have begun cropping up elsewhere about town and the Jersey City Council is considering a plan to regulate the boxes based on previous court precedents, a step in the right direction given that, in a democracy, laws are generally passed and then enforced.



ELIAGRAN

CUFFED: *Indy* Independent Associate Editor Peter Rugh is led away by police after raising a ruckus at the June 13 Jersey City Council meeting. Three other *Indy* staffers were ejected for loudly demanding the return of confiscated news boxes.

GUARDIAN: *Indy* Contributing Editor Ellen Davidson defends the First Amendment.

WELCOME TO THE NEW YORK SPRING

IT BEGAN ON JUNE 26 WITH
OCASIO'S UPSET VICTORY. IT
DOESN'T HAVE TO STOP THERE.

BY THE EDITORS

It was one of the most dramatic political upsets in recent American history — not only because a 28-year-old Latina socialist knocked off a powerful Democratic incumbent but how she did it.

"They have money, we have people," as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez herself put it.

New York is filled with mediocre machine politicians who rely on big money contributions, the advantages of incumbency and restrictive voter laws to maintain their grip on power. Democrats in New York State and across the country just assume that's how you make it in this business. You have to play the game.

But Ocasio's campaign proves

porters while doing the bidding of their big money donors on anything that involves a dollar sign. These milksop finks who call themselves "leaders" end up filling a lot of political space that they haven't earned and do not deserve. Their double game is going to be harder to sustain.

State primaries on Sept. 13 are another opportunity to transform New York politics with non-corporate, small-donor-based left candidates running for a host of seats, including Governor (Cynthia Nixon), Lt. Governor (Jumaane Williams) and Attorney General (Zephyr Teachout). Members of the Independent Democratic Conference (IDC), who, with Gov. Andrew Cuomo's tacit approval, have collaborated to give Republicans control of the State Senate, are facing a slate of challeng-

ELIA GRAN

A Daily Independent
Global News Hour
with Amy Goodman
and Juan González

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Updated Edition

Chacón
and Davis
examine the
hundred and
fifty years of
state racism

pie, as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez herself put it.

New York is filled with mediocre machine politicians who rely on big money contributions, the advantages of incumbency and restrictive voter laws to maintain their grip on power. Democrats in New York State and across the country just assume that's how you make it in this business. You have to play the game.

But Ocasio's campaign proves there is another way.

On June 26, the former-Bernie Sanders' staffer trounced Joe Crowley — an embedded party boss and favorite to replace Nancy Pelosi as Speaker of the House — in the race for the Queens-Bronx seat the Congressman had occupied since his opponent was just 8 years old. And Ocasio (pictured above) did it by refusing to take money from corporate special interests, relying instead on small donations and a hardscrabble army of volunteers.

Seventy percent of Ocasio's campaign funds came from donations under \$200. By contrast, members of New York City's Congressional delegation have all received less than 10 percent of their financing from donations below \$200.

Most Democratic politicians couldn't imagine doing the kind of intensive, grassroots movement building work Ocasio performed to get elected. That's because they don't have real commitments to or relationships with the people they claim to represent. Many, like Crowley, were installed in their positions by party insiders and then entrench themselves with their incumbency.

New York Democrats are for the most part progressives on issues of social inclusion — immigration, gay rights, respect for diversity. But in other areas, they lip synch one set of positions for their working class sup-

porters with non-corporate, small-donor-based left candidates running for a host of seats, including Governor (Cynthia Nixon), Lt. Governor (Jumaane Williams) and Attorney General (Zephyr Teachout). Members of the Independent Democratic Conference (IDC), who, with Gov. Andrew Cuomo's tacit approval, have collaborated to give Republicans control of the State Senate, are facing a slate of challengers. Meanwhile, muckraker Ross Barkan in South Brooklyn is taking on State Senator Marty Golden, who has steered hundreds of thousands of campaign dollars into his family's catering business.

A New York Spring that sees the people of this state overturn their corrupt, ossified political system and usher in a new era of genuinely progressive governance is possible. Ocasio has shown emphatically that it can be done.

Grassroots movements and campaigns benefit from independent media that takes them seriously and amplifies their voices. In June, we featured Ocasio on the cover this newspaper and moved 45,000 copies across the city including 15,000 copies of which we distributed in Queens and the Bronx where she and her supporters ultimately defeated Crowley by a 15-point margin.

We're looking to step up again over the summer to cover the next phase of the political revolution underway in New York. But we can only do it without the support of readers like you. And stay tuned. The best is yet to come.

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Updated Edition

NO ONE IS ILLEGAL

Fighting Racism and State Violence on the U.S.-Mexico Border



**JUSTIN AKERS CHACÓN
MIKE DAVIS**

Photographs by Julián Cardona

Chacón and Davis examine the hundred and fifty years of state racism and vigilante violence that have led up to Trump's cruelty today—and the struggles that have challenged wave after wave of xenophobia and exploitation.



July 2018 THE INDYPENDENT

"*No One Is Illegal* powerfully argues that the borders themselves are barriers to imagining real social justice. An urgent, important must-read."
— Jeff Chang, author, *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation*

BATTLE OF THE GRIFTERS

RIVAL BROOKLYN DEMOCRATIC PARTY FACTIONS FIGHT OVER COURTHOUSE SPOILS

BY THEODORE HAMM

He's retired, out of politics," says Brooklyn district leader Geoffrey Davis regarding former Democratic party boss Clarence Norman. But then again, Davis adds, "Does anyone ever really retire?"

Since his return from prison in 2011, Norman has indeed steadily reasserted his influence. Starting with Ken Thompson's successful 2013 effort to topple his nemesis, District Attorney Joe Hynes, Norman has played a key role in local elections. This past May, Norman effectively chose the Brooklyn party's candidate for surrogate court judge on this fall's ballot.

Judge selection may not sound like a consequential move, but backing candidates is one of the party organization's main functions. And picking judges has been a primary concern of the current Democratic boss, Frank Seddio.

Norman went to prison for a slew of campaign

although not because they were fighting on behalf of the little guy. One Kings County Supreme Court judge accepted cash, as well as cigars and rum in exchange for favorable divorce proceedings. Another was caught taking \$18,000 in unmarked bills in court. Meanwhile, one of Norman's surrogate court judges, Michael Feinberg, steered millions in excessive legal fees to a longtime colleague. After Feinberg was forced out, his replacement was none other than Frank Seddio, who resigned two years later amid allegations that he funneled campaign money to his inner circle.

In 2003, Hynes began to investigate Norman, his former ally, for allegedly "selling judgeships." The editorial boards and Mayor Bloomberg cheered Hynes' crusade, although many insiders suspect that the DA was motivated mainly by his anger at Norman, because he felt that the party boss didn't work hard enough to squash Sandra Roper's upstart 2001 campaign for him. Between 2005 and 2007, Brooklyn prosecutors — led by Hynes hatchet man Mike Vecchione — brought

judges tasked with reducing the backlog of foreclosure cases in Brooklyn. While Thompson reportedly closed nearly 400 cases in 2017, whether she did so on terms favorable to lenders or borrowers is not clear. Her actions in such proceedings would be fair game if she faced a competitor in the race, however.

But at the moment, Thompson has no challenger. According to veteran Brooklyn political consultant Gary Tilzer, who has managed several successful campaigns by judge candidates not backed by the party, the uncontested race is part of a larger trend. "The reform political clubs in Brooklyn no longer care about challenging the machine," laments Tilzer. "And the courthouse is the lifeblood of the party."

One reform-oriented group that is calling attention to party decision-making, New Kings Democrats (NKD), was recently accused of "political gentrification" by a handful of black district

THE BOSS: Brooklyn Democratic Party leader Frank Seddio is facing a growing challenge to his rule.



ASAF SHALEV

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What is clear is that Clarence Norman, still only 66 years old, shows no signs of retiring anytime soon.

VULTURE EQUITY CIRCLES EAST HARLEM

EMBATTLED TENANTS PRESSURED TO TAKE BUY-OUTS

By GEORGIA KROMREI

In a rent-controlled apartment on the first floor of 231 E. 117th St., Andre Calderon is sweltering. The temperature in his home has averaged 85°F since mid-May.

"I have to keep the door open," he says. "What a way to live. I can't turn the A/C on with the heat because it will get the walls wet."

When Calderon first called 311 to complain he was told the city does not take complaints for too much heat until June 1. A few weeks and several additional phone calls later, his radiator is still hot to the touch.

Since the investment firm Emerald Equity bought 231 E. 117th St. and 46 other East Harlem buildings in December 2016 — the "Dawnay Day portfolio" — its tenants have experienced badly deteriorating living conditions, coupled with offers to pay them to leave. According to city Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) records, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of complaints

mo's 2018 re-election campaign, through three separate limited-liability corporations.

Crystal Vizcaíno, a community organizer with the Urban Housing Assistance Board (UHAB), says 105 E. 117th St.

has the worst living conditions she has seen in her career. When she visited Lucy Delemaco, a homebound, 93-year-old, Cuban-born tenant who has lived in her rent-controlled apartment since 1946, she found "conditions that were so bad, her home attendant could no longer care for her."

"The windows were open in the winter because the smell of mold was so strong," said Vizcaíno. "The only source of heat in the apartment was the stove. There were five holes in her ceiling, and her apartment had not been renovated since the 1970s. Emerald Equity knew how she was living."

Delemaco and 12 other members of the building's tenant association signed a petition calling for Emer-

TORTURED

TENANT: Florencia Aguilar, one of many long suffering residents 231 E. 117 St.



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cause it will get the walls wet. When Calderon first called 311 to complain he was told the city does not take complaints for too much heat until June 1. A few weeks and several additional phone calls later, his radiator is still hot to the touch.

Since the investment firm Emerald Equity bought 231 E. 117th St. and 46 other East Harlem buildings in December 2016 — the “Dawnay Day portfolio” — its tenants have experienced badly deteriorating living conditions, coupled with offers to pay them to leave. According to city Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) records, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of complaints about lead paint, mold, pests and lack of cooking gas and heat. At a joint meeting of the tenants’ associations from 105 E. 117th and 231 E. 117th in March, resident after resident spoke about their children getting rashes from lead dust, periods without cooking gas, infestations of cockroaches and rats and a desperate need for repairs.

“Do they think that because we are Spanish we are stupid?” Aracelia Gines asked. “That we do not know our rights?”

Meanwhile, ArchRock, the building’s management company, has been aggressively offering tenants cash buyouts, hastily renovating vacated apartments and renting them out for as much as three times what the old residents were paying.

This pattern is all too typical of how loopholes in the city and state rent-regulation laws give landlords an incentive to drive out rent-controlled and rent-stabilized tenants and move wealthier, market-rate renters in. The state’s 1997 weakening of the laws let landlords charge an automatic 20 percent rent increase whenever a tenant moves out and enabled them to deregulate vacant apartments once their rent got high enough. The state’s minimal enforcement of its laws against illegal overcharges has enabled owners to deregulate thousands of apartments illegally.

The state’s rent-stabilization laws, which protect an estimated two million tenants in New York and its suburbs, will expire in June 2019. Tenant advocates are urging the state legislature to repeal vacancy decontrol and the automatic vacancy bonus and tighten limits on how much landlords can raise rents for renovations. The Assembly has passed such measures several times, but in the state Senate, they have been blocked by an alliance of Republicans and renegade Democrats, with the tacit support of Gov. Andrew Cuomo.

The Brookfield Properties hedge fund, which loaned Emerald Equity \$300 million to buy the Dawnay Day portfolio, has so far contributed \$150,000 to Cu-

93-year-old, Cuban-born tenant who has lived in her rent-controlled apartment since 1946, she found “conditions that were so bad, her home attendant could no longer care for her.”

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Delemaco and 12 other members of the building’s tenant association signed a petition calling for Emerald Equity to make repairs. Vizcaino delivered it to the company on January 10. Emerald did not respond. Two weeks later, HPD placed 105 E. 117th into the Alternative Enforcement Program, a citywide list of 250 buildings the agency categorizes as “severely distressed.”

UHAB was hired by Manhattan Legal Services to organize tenants in Emerald Equity buildings in East Harlem. They were able to finance it because the City Council approved increased funding to help tenants in disputes with their landlords last November, a concession granted for supporting the upzoning of East Harlem.

Tenants also got a boost from *The Independent*. Our February feature article on tenant organizing at 231 E. 117th was distributed in other Emerald Equity-owned buildings, translated into Spanish and made available online. UHAB is now organizing in six Emerald buildings.

Management has sought to evade protests. In February, ArchRock told tenants at 231 E. 117th that its office in the neighborhood had moved and that if they had any complaints, they would have to send them to a post office box in Brooklyn. The tenants later discovered that ArchRock had relocated the office to a space a block further east on East 117th St., where the street-level windows are covered with thick black paint and employees come in and out through an unmarked cellar door.

“Of course they don’t want us to know where the office is,” says 231 E. 117th resident Maria Miranda. “They don’t want to see me in there complaining anymore.”

Miranda, 63, suffers from asthma, and breathing in dust from her unrepaired bathroom has sent her to the emergency room twice this year. Yet she has played a leading role in the tenant organizing drive.

Stopping at every flight to catch her breath, she slowly climbed the stairs of 322 E. 117th St. in March. On the top floor, nearly all of the apartments were empty and in

Continued on page 15

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ONE WOMAN'S STRUGGLE

WITH HER HUSBAND IN DETENTION, AN UNDOCUMENTED HONDURAN MOTHER OF THREE TRIES TO HOLD HER FAMILY TOGETHER IN THE TRUMP ERA

BY ERIN SHERIDAN

In late 2005, Ana, a Honduran woman in her mid-twenties, stood looking at the rubber rim of a tire on the edge of the Rio Grande, just across from the U.S. border. The smuggler she had paid to escort her and her five-year-old son from Tegucigalpa had just asked her to take her clothes off. Wary of getting undressed in front of a stranger, she refused. The coyote responded, "Then, you're going to get wet."

"OK, then I will get wet," she said to him before lying down in the tire with her son, Michael, in her arms. The man stripped down, climbed into the water and pulled the two across the flowing river and into the United States.

Thirteen years later, Ana, a pseudonym she requested for fear of retaliation, now 39, is still undocumented, but has two U.S.-born daughters

mediately. Their children, who could not legally be detained in adult jails, were held in separate facilities if they were not claimed by someone who could prove they were a relative.

In Honduras, Ana and her husband had managed to get by. She worked three jobs and Juan ran his own business. But life in Tegucigalpa got increasingly dangerous as gang violence escalated. Gang members gave Ana's brother-in-law, a police officer, a beating as a warning. The family began receiving death threats.

"Over there, in the neighborhood that we are from, you can't wear your preference of the sport team you like if the gang is against it," she says. "You can't wear some types of shoes if they don't like it. It's horrible."

The couple moved to Costa Rica after the birth of their daughter, but left after she died. They were too devastated to focus on running their

wanted to save money. He was thinking, 'If something happens to me, I want to help my family.' He didn't want us to be homeless like before."

In January, Juan was arrested by ICE when he checked in. He was detained at the Hudson County Correctional Facility in Kearny, New Jersey, one of three major ICE-maintained detention centers in the state.

The Hudson County jail has housed detained immigrants since the mid-1990s. A 2016 report by Detention Watch documented an overall "poor quality of life" as well as lack of adequate access to medical care and legal assistance.

It costs prisoners around \$1 to make a phone call for 18 to 19 minutes. If Juan needs extra food, clothes, or toiletries, Ana has to either buy them through the jail commissary or send him money. Juan got a job inside the jail cleaning bathrooms, but quit after he was paid only \$1 a day.



GABRIELLA SZPINT

gier she had paid to escape her and her five-year-old son from Tegucigalpa had just asked her to take her clothes off. Wary of getting undressed in front of a stranger, she refused. The coyote responded, "Then, you're going to get wet."

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Thirteen years later, Ana, a pseudonym she requested for fear of retaliation, now 39, is still undocumented, but has two U.S.-born daughters who are citizens. She has seen her husband, Juan, deported once — which got her and the children evicted, leaving them homeless — and detained three times, most recently for five months earlier this year. Michael, now 19, is allowed to stay temporarily under the Deferred Access for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. When we spoke this spring he was supporting the entire family, running his father's beverage-delivery business while his father was locked up.

Ana remembers the silence on the bank of the Rio Grande that day in 2005. It was two in the afternoon. There were no helicopters, no Border Patrol agents ready to place her under arrest.

"I thought, they have to know that people are passing," she recalls.

The coyote instructed her to walk toward a U.S. Customs and Border Patrol outpost. There, she surrendered to an agent who drove her to an office, sat her down in air-conditioned room and stared into her eyes for a quarter of an hour without speaking.

"He told me, 'You are so — *sinvergüenza*. You have no shame, you should be ashamed of yourself.' He told me in Spanish. He said, 'How did you come here? Why are you here? And you had the audacity to bring this little boy here?'"

Eventually, a female agent walked in, asked to take over the case and began asking Ana routine questions. She was taken to a shelter with her son, put on a bus with \$60 and sent to meet Juan, who had arrived several months prior. She did not speak English.

Had Ana crossed into the United States in 2018, she and her son would likely have been separated. In April, the Trump administration decided it would prosecute all people crossing the border without visas on criminal charges, instead of civil charges and jail them if they did not return im-

mediately. But he in Tegucigalpa got increasingly dangerous as gang violence escalated. Gang members gave Ana's brother-in-law, a police officer, a beating as a warning. The family began receiving death threats.

"Over there, in the neighborhood that we are from, you can't wear your preference of the sport team you like if the gang is against it," she says. "You can't wear some types of shoes if they don't like it. It's horrible."

The couple moved to Costa Rica after the birth of their daughter, but left after she died. They were too devastated to focus on running their business, so they returned to Honduras, where the threats began again.

"We couldn't make it anymore. We didn't realize," Ana says. "And we weren't paying attention to our son. He was staying with my mother-in-law. We realized we were depressed. That's why we decided to come."

In the United States, the couple had another daughter, now 10 — but Ana and the children became homeless after Juan was seized by immigration agents in 2009.

"The next day, my landlord came up and told me, 'You have to leave the apartment because you won't be able to pay,'" she says. "My husband had just paid rent recently. I got so scared and my husband was telling me, 'You have to get out of there because they are going to come and get you.'"

"I found myself with my children outside in the snow. At night. So I went to the train."

Juan was deported to Honduras. He left Ana an emergency fund, which she gave to the pastor at her church for safekeeping. She went back to work as a housekeeper and took refuge with the children in a city shelter. Juan got more death threats in Honduras, so he spent the family's savings hiring a coyote to come back to the United States.

"After my husband came, we left the shelter and we started again," Ana says. But in 2013, Juan was detained for a second time. His lawyer was able to get him released on humanitarian grounds, with an order of supervision. That meant he had to check in with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) every six months.

After Donald Trump became President, their lawyer warned that Juan was likely to be deported. "I started to get anxiety, real anxiety," Ana says. "My husband started to work more. He was getting skinny, his eyes were really red because all he did was work. You know why? Because he

sees, one of three major ICE-maintained detention centers in the state.

The Hudson County jail has housed detained immigrants since the mid-1990s. A 2016 report by Detention Watch documented an overall "poor quality of life" as well as lack of adequate access to medical care and legal assistance.

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Michael has put off plans to go to college. He has taken over Juan's beverage-delivery business and is working 17-hour days to support the family.

"He says, 'Mami, my father hasn't done nothing bad.' He repeats that, a lot. He told me three days ago, 'I can't, I'm tired. This is so hard.'"

On the evening of Juan's arrest, Ana told her two young daughters that he had driven to another state to visit a friend. Her 10-year-old, however, quickly caught on. Several days later, she asked Ana if she was getting a divorce. "I thought, 'Oh, my god, this is the time,'" recalls Ana.

"I said, 'You remember when Papi was going to that big office downtown?' Because one day we came and waited, he went inside and he came out with his permit when he was under that order of supervision."

"And she said, 'Oh — so you mean that when Trump came in he made that order and he changed it?' She's a very articulate and strong 10-year-old and when she spoke she looked in my eyes. 'I hate him,' she said. 'Why is he doing that? That's not fair.'"

Ana's younger daughter, 5 years old, doesn't understand why her father is absent. "Sometimes she tells me, 'Give me my Papi.' And I tell her that he's going to come soon. I don't know if she feels that it is because of me he's not here."

Ana recently graduated from community college with honors. She was ineligible for financial aid because she's undocumented, but the school gave her scholarships to help her finish. She also couldn't complete an internship at a local hospital because she does not have a Social Security number.

Michael has expressed interest in studying business. Ana hopes to continue her education to become a nutritionist and get an M.S. and PhD. "In

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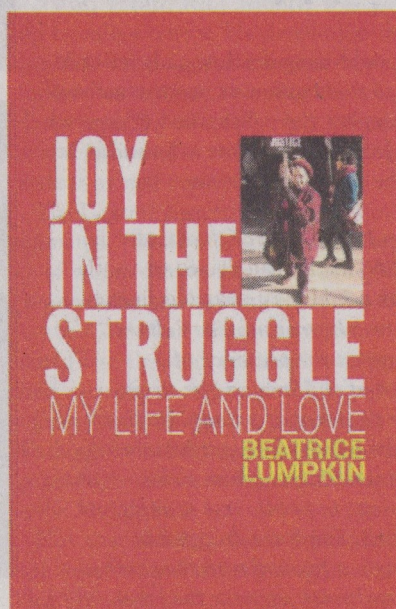
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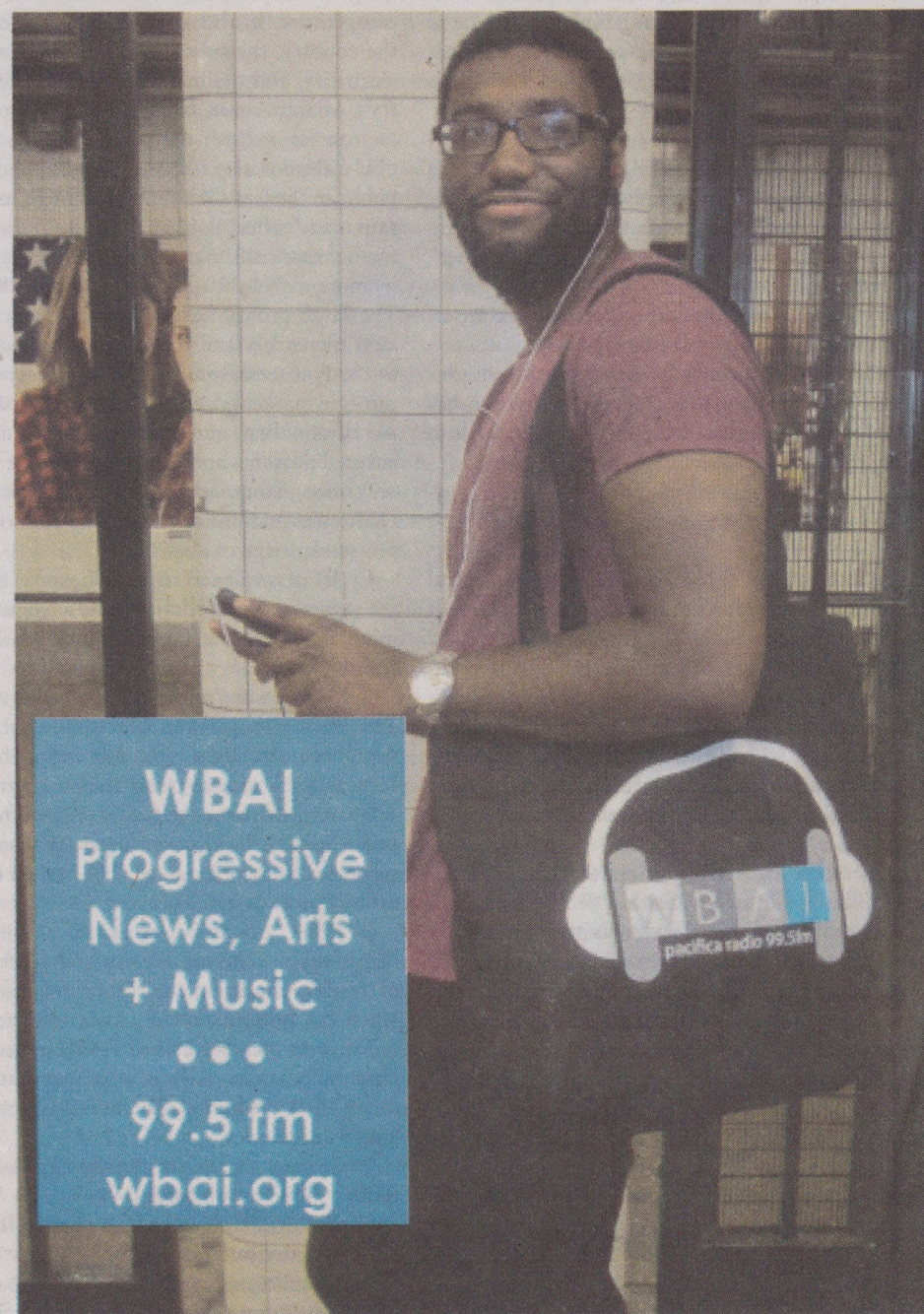
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IT'S THE OTHER WAY AROUND

CENTRAL AMERICAN IMMIGRANTS AREN'T INVADING US. WE INVADED THEM.

BY JOHN TARLETON

Children locked in dog kennels, crying by the sides of roads at night, wrapped in glittering Mylar blankets on the floors of Border Patrol processing centers, stowed away in an abandoned Walmart, flown thousands of miles from their parents. The sounds of their wails an "orchestra" to the ears of a border guard, who is heard quipping in audio captured at a child detention center that all that is "missing is a conductor."

But there is a conductor.

He sits in a leather chair in the Oval Office, his arms crossed in a gesture not unlike that of a petulant toddler on time-out. He blames his political opponents for the nightmare troubling America's conscience — 2,300 children, including infants, separated from their parents since April, when he instituted a "zero tolerance" policy to prosecute parents on criminal charges for attempting to enter the United States at its southern border.

"God has ordained the government for his purpose,"

an invasion by a powerful northern neighbor intent on extracting as much wealth and resources as it can from smaller, weaker nations, and ready to bend their governments to its will?

...

BANANA REPUBLIC. The phrase conjures up images of a languid tropical locale where the government is corrupt and unstable and the economy functions at the whim of a few powerful interests. O. Henry first used it in a 1904 novel based on the time he spent on the Atlantic coast of Honduras, where the United Fruit Company was muscling its way into the country.

Next door in Guatemala, United Fruit would become the country's largest landholder in the first decades of the 20th century, with much of that land lying idle to keep it out of the hands of potential competitors. It also controlled the sole railroad in the country, the sole facilities capable of producing electricity, and the main port facilities on the country's Atlantic coast, while ruling its labor force with an iron fist.

El Salvador also became a full-fledged banana re-

from the original Sandino. Revolutionary movements surged in El Salvador and Guatemala as well.

For the United States, it was a moment of reckoning. Our government could have embraced the Central American people's demands for freedom and a better life, something we all want for ourselves. Instead, the United States doubled down in support of its regional anti-communist allies and their butchery when President Ronald Reagan came into office in 1981. He had promised, in as many words, to make America great again after the U.S. defeat in Vietnam six years earlier.

Reagan staffed his administration with right-wing ideologues such as U.N. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick, Lt. Colonel Oliver North, Elliot Abrams and John Bolton. They saw their battle against Central America's revolutionary movements as an existential struggle between good and evil, capitalist democracy and totalitarian communism, in which the end justifies any means. The price for their holy war would be paid with the blood of others.

...



But there is a conductor. He sits in a leather chair in the Oval Office, his arms crossed in a gesture not unlike that of a petulant toddler on time-out. He blames his political opponents for the nightmare troubling America's conscience — 2,300 children, including infants, separated from their parents since April, when he instituted a “zero tolerance” policy to prosecute parents on criminal charges for attempting to enter the United States at its southern border.

“God has ordained the government for his purposes,” says his attorney general, citing Romans 13, a Bible verse used in the past to justify slavery.

“Womp-womp,” says the president's former campaign manager, imitating the “Debbie Downer” sound effect.

“I don't care, do u?” asks the all-capitalized lettering on the jacket cloaking the First Lady.

It turns out people care a lot. Yet despite the heightened scrutiny the detention of migrant children has received in recent weeks, little effort has been made to explain the origins of the crisis.

• • •

WHEN THE MEDIA STOPS to explain why Central American refugees are pouring over the border, it notes that Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala — where most of the refugees hail from — are poor, politically unstable and plagued by some of the highest murder rates in the world. This begs the question, why are things so bad there? What chain of events has caused parents to flee at great risk to themselves, only to see their children ripped from them and tossed into cages?

Not that the right wing wants to hear it. When Donald Trump, Attorney General Jeff Sessions and Fox News talk about people who flee their homes and travel thousands of miles to try and enter the United States, they don't see people in need. They see an “invasion” by hordes of criminals who will burden the rest of us with their lawlessness and demands for public services.

This is a smear against immigrants as an entire group, who studies repeatedly show are less likely to commit crimes, and who contribute far more in taxes than they receive back in public services. As for the “invasion,” what if the real invasion began more than a century ago (if not five centuries ago) and continues to this day? And what if it has come not from the South to the North but the other way around —

Atlantic coast of Honduras, where the United Fruit Company was muscling its way into the country.

Next door in Guatemala, United Fruit would become the country's largest landholder in the first decades of the 20th century, with much of that land lying idle to keep it out of the hands of potential competitors. It also controlled the sole railroad in the country, the sole facilities capable of producing electricity, and the main port facilities on the country's Atlantic coast, while ruling its labor force with an iron fist.

El Salvador also became a full-fledged banana republic in the late 19th century, though its rugged terrain made coffee, not bananas, the main export crop for international markets. Coffee exports increased by more than 1,000 percent between 1880 and 1914. The large profits fueled the rapid concentration of land ownership and the rise of an oligarchy known as the Fourteen Families. This process was aided by pro-free market governments that abolished communal landholdings and passed anti-vagrancy laws that ensured peasants and other rural people would work on coffee plantations. In 1912, the hated National Guard was established as a rural police force that suppressed any sign of dissent.

Cycles of revolt and repression would follow across the region, with the United States invariably backing monstrous dictators straight out of a Gabriel García Márquez novel.

A 1932 peasant revolt in El Salvador was crushed, and 30,000 people were butchered over 10 days, in what became known as *La Matanza*, The Massacre. In nearby Nicaragua, rebel leader Augusto Sandino was captured and executed in 1934 after attending peace talks with the government. His movement was subsequently wiped out, as U.S.-backed dictator Anastasio Somoza seized power.

In 1944, progressive army officers in Guatemala helped topple a brutal dictator and usher in a decade of health, education and labor reforms. However, when the government of Jacobo Arbenz moved to redistribute some of United Fruit's unused estates to landless peasants, Arbenz was swept aside in 1954 in a CIA-backed coup. The usual reign of terror followed for decades.

So what does all this distant history have to do with today's immigration battles?

In the late 1970s, pent-up demands for change in Central America erupted. In Nicaragua, the Somoza family dictatorship was toppled by the Sandinistas, a leftist rebel group that took its name and inspiration

Reagan staffed his administration with right-wing ideologues such as U.N. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick, Lt. Colonel Oliver North, Elliot Abrams and John Bolton. They saw their battle against Central America's revolutionary movements as an existential struggle between good and evil, capitalist democracy and totalitarian communism, in which the end justifies any means. The price for their holy war would be paid with the blood of others.

• • •

IN EL SALVADOR, right-wing death squads ran wild, killing thousands of trade unionists, student activists and others — dumping their disfigured bodies for anyone to see. As Joan Didion wrote in *Salvador*, her 1983 account of the country's torment:

“The dead and the pieces of the dead turn up in El Salvador everywhere, every day, as taken for granted as in a nightmare, or a horror movie. Vultures of course suggest the presence of a body. A knot of children on the streets suggests the presence of a body. Bodies turn up in the brush of vacant lots, in garbage thrown down ravines in the richest districts, in public rest rooms, in bus stations. Some are dropped in Lake Ilopango, a few miles to the east of the city, and wash up near the lakeside cottages and clubs frequented by what remains in San Salvador of the sporting bourgeoisie.”

As the surviving activists fled to the mountains to join a burgeoning guerrilla movement, \$5 billion in U.S. arms and assistance would flow into El Salvador over the next decade to prop up the government. More massacres followed. In one of the war's most infamous episodes, the U.S.-trained and equipped Atlacatl Battalion massacred more than 800 peasants in the village of El Mozote and surrounding hamlets that were thought to harbor rebel sympathizers. As narrated in Mark Danner's *The Massacre at El Mozote*, Salvadoran soldiers first killed all the adults and then took young women and girls as young as 10 to nearby hillsides to gang rape before finishing them off. Finally, El Mozote's surviving “tender-age” children were led to a church building where they were killed by gunfire, bayonets, and rifle butts to the head.



THE HEAT IS ON: Protesters outside ICE offices in El Paso, Texas on June 19.

WAITING: Scores of Central American refugees camp out at the base of the U.S. border wall in Tijuana, Mexico.

COLD WARRIOR: During the 1980s, President Ronald Reagan enthusiastically backed the most violent and repressive forces in Central America.

ER WAY AROUND AREN'T INVADING US. WE INVADED THEM.

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IANA MARTÍNEZ ESTÉNS

The massacre's lone survivor, Rufina Amaya, a mother of four, hid nearby in the thorny brush, unnoticed by soldiers. She heard the children's cries for help and vowed to share their story with the world. When word got out, the Reagan administration treated the massacre as so much fake news. The *New York Times* demoted Raymond Bonner, the reporter who broke the story. When investigators were finally able to enter El Mozote more than a decade later, they found the remains of 131 children aged 12 or younger.

A similar dynamic unfolded in Guatemala, where urban protests were suppressed mercilessly and the Army unleashed a scorched-earth campaign in the highlands, massacring whole villages of Mayan Indians thought to be in cahoots with leftist rebels. In Nicaragua, the Reagan administration organized Somoza's former henchmen into a mercenary army known as the Contras, who targeted teachers, doctors and others sent to work in the countryside by the Sandinista government.

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IN EL SALVADOR, right-wing death squads ran wild, killing thousands of trade unionists, student activists and others — dumping their disfigured bodies for anyone to see. As Joan Didion wrote in *Salvador*, her 1983 account of the country's torment:

"The dead and the pieces of the dead turn up in El Salvador everywhere, every day, as taken for granted as in a nightmare, or a horror movie. Vultures of course suggest the presence of a body. A knot of children on the streets suggests the presence of a body. Bodies turn up in the brush of vacant lots, in garbage thrown down ravines in the richest districts, in public rest rooms, in bus stations. Some are dropped in Lake Ilopango, a few miles to the east of the city, and wash up near the lakeside cottages and clubs frequented by what remains in San Salvador of the sporting bourgeoisie."

As the surviving activists fled to the mountains to join a burgeoning guerrilla movement, \$5 billion in U.S. arms and assistance would flow into El Salvador over the next decade to prop up the government. More massacres followed. In one of the war's most infamous episodes, the U.S.-trained and equipped Atlacatl Battalion massacred more than 800 peasants in the village of El Mozote and surrounding hamlets that were thought to harbor rebel sympathizers. As narrated in Mark Danner's *The Massacre at El Mozote*, Salvadoran soldiers first killed all the adults and then took young women and girls as young as 10 to nearby hillsides to gang rape before finishing them off. Finally, El Mozote's surviving "tender-age" children were led to a church building where they were killed by gunfire, bayonets, and rifle butts to the head.



MARIANA MARTINEZ/ESTÉNS



THE HEAT IS ON: Protesters outside ICE offices in EL Paso, Texas on June 19.

WAITING: Scores of Central American refugees camp out at the base of the U.S. border wall in Tijuana, Mexico.

COLD WARRIOR: During the 1980s, President Ronald Reagan enthusiastically backed the most violent and repressive forces in Central America.

urban protests were suppressed mercilessly and the Army unleashed a scorched-earth campaign in the highlands, massacring whole villages of Mayan Indians thought to be in cahoots with leftist rebels. In Nicaragua, the Reagan administration organized Somoza's former henchmen into a mercenary army known as the Contras, who targeted teachers, doctors and others sent to work in the countryside by the Sandinista government.

Reagan complained that Guatemala's military dictator, Efraín Ríos Montt, was getting a bum rap from his critics. He demanded that Congress continue funding the Contras because the Sandinistas were "just two days driving time from Harlingen, Texas" on the U.S.-Mexico border — as if a nation of 3 million was going to invade a nuclear-armed superpower.

The Central American wars of the 1980s left an estimated 300,000 people dead, the great majority of whom died at the hands of right-wing forces. Hundreds of thousands fled to the United States. As the Cold War wrapped up, peace treaties were signed and the wars wound down, leaving destabilized societies in their wake. The region, no longer a geopolitical flashpoint, was largely forgotten by Washington policymakers, whose attentions were increasingly drawn to fighting bloody new crusades in the Middle East.

Not that the U.S.-backed bloodletting in Central America was entirely forgotten in elite circles. Vice President Dick Cheney, asked in a 2004 campaign debate how the George W. Bush administration would respond to the growing insurgency in Iraq, suggested the "Salvadoran option" would do the trick. Sure enough, over the next several years, U.S.-backed Shi'ite militias unleashed a wave of terror and ethnic cleansing against the country's Sunni minority, setting the stage for the later rise of ISIS.

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IN EL SALVADOR, there was a brief moment of hope after peace accords were signed in 1992 between the government and the FMLN, the leftist rebel group. Under the deal, the FMLN laid down its arms and became a legal political party. The Salvadoran Army was cut in half, and known human-rights abusers were purged. The National Guard was disbanded and replaced with a civilian police force that incorporated some former FMLN combatants.

The FMLN competed for the first time in elec-

dent vowed on national television to prosecute criminals with a *mano dura* policy. What I didn't realize was that the United States had begun to see Salvadorans with criminal records in many cases, had come to Los Angeles in the 1980s and later had joined the *maras*. Instead of the 18th Street gang and the 18th Street gang, the way of jobs or of drugs (the U.S. aid spigot dried up) and an abundance of guerrilla, El Salvador's violent crime explosion would soon expand to Honduras, with similar results in the three nations in the northern hemisphere. El Salvador became the homicide capital of the Americas.

WHEN IT WAS LEAST expected, Honduras. The country of the 1980s-era corruption and the poorest countries in the world. In 2006, a timber magnate, Manuel "Mel" Zelaya, was elected with fanfare. To everyone's surprise, he moved idly to the left. During his first term in office, free education, along with free school lunches, a minimum wage was hiked, and domestic employees became entitled to a security system for the first time. Friendly relations with Hugo Chavez's Venezuela rolled his increased social popularity.

For once in its long history, Honduras had a president that the people. Honduran elites found Zelaya intolerable. In June 2009, a coup with the tacit approval of the administration, and was spent the night of the night.

Massive protests followed. Both sides clung to power. Both sides motivated assassinations. Elections in 2013 and 2017 were rife with fraud and saw another change of power by police. Amid the chaos, the



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tions in the spring of 1994. At that time, I was staying in a dusty market town as the guest of a local family, and hitchhiked around the country without incident. Above all, people conveyed to me a feeling of relief tinged with optimism that a conflict that claimed 75,000 lives over a dozen years was finally over.

The conservative ARENA party won the election, and the FMLN finished second. It all went down peacefully. When I returned to visit a year later, the country was seized by fear of a growing crime wave. A sense of menace lurked in the air. The new president vowed on national television to go after the criminals with a *mano duro*, or heavy hand.

What I didn't realize at the time was that the United States had begun deporting thousands of young Salvadorans with criminal records. The deportees, in many cases, had come with their refugee parents to Los Angeles in the early 1980s as small children and later had joined Salvadoran street gangs.

Instead of the Bloods and the Crips, it was MS-13 and the 18th Street gang. With a weak state, little in the way of jobs or opportunities for the deportees (the U.S. aid spigot dried up once the war was over),

north to the U.S. in 2014. After a lull, the number of asylum-seeking refugees from Central America is growing again. Barack Obama, the cool and detached deporter-in-chief, oversaw the removal of three million immigrants during his eight years in office, only to be replaced by Donald Trump with his naked, unabashed racism.

While the courts will have their say on questions of law, people around the country are leading the way with acts of solidarity. Here are a few examples.

RIO GRANDE VALLEY — *In this normally sleepy corner of Texas, waves of protesters from around the country have descended on the detention sites where child refugees have been warehoused.*

NEW YORK CITY — *On the night of June 20, hundreds of New Yorkers turned out at LaGuardia Airport to greet children separated from their parents being flown into the New York area on commercial airlines.*

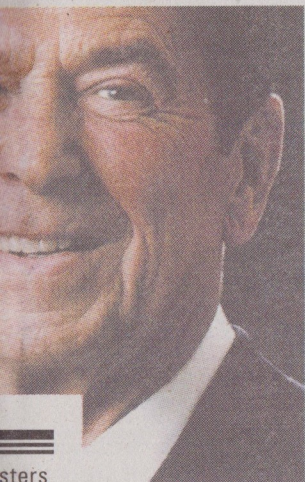
SAN DIEGO — *Religious leaders marched June 23 to the Otay Mesa Detention Center and chanted*



RIANA MARTINEZ/ESTÉNS



MARIANA MARTINEZ/STERN



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Instead of the Bloods and the Crips, it was MS-13 and the 18th Street gang. With a weak state, little in the way of jobs or opportunities for the deportees (the U.S. aid spigot dried up once the war was over), and an abundance of demobilized soldiers and ex-guerrilla, El Salvador became a petri dish in which violent crime exploded. MS-13 and 18th Street would soon expand their reach into Guatemala and Honduras, with similarly harrowing results. The three nations in the northern half of Central America became the homicide capital of the world.

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WHEN IT WAS LEAST EXPECTED, good news came to Honduras. The country had been spared the worst of the 1980s-era conflicts. Still, it was one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere. In 2006, a timber magnate and cattle rancher named Manuel "Mel" Zelaya became president with little fanfare. To everyone's surprise, Zelaya moved rapidly to the left. During his three and a half years in office, free education for all children was introduced along with free school meals for poor children; the minimum wage was boosted by 80 percent; and domestic employees became covered by the social security system for the first time. Zelaya also established friendly relations with Cuba and struck an alliance with Hugo Chavez's Venezuela which helped bankroll his increased social spending.

For once in its long, oligarchical history, Honduras had a president that was doing something for the people. Honduran elites and U.S. hawks found Zelaya intolerable. In June 2009, he was overthrown in a coup with the tacit support of the Obama administration, and was spirited into exile in the middle of the night.

Massive protests followed, but the new regime clung to power. Both common crime and politically motivated assassinations soared. The presidential elections in 2013 and 2017 were marred by claims of fraud and saw anti-government protesters killed by police. Amid the chaos, refugees began streaming

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NEW YORK CITY — On the night of June 20, hundreds of New Yorkers turned out at LaGuardia Airport to greet children separated from their parents being flown into the New York area on commercial airlines.

SAN DIEGO — Religious leaders marched June 23 to the Otay Mesa Detention Center and chanted "No estás solo" (You are not alone). When the detainees heard them, they cheered loudly.

PORTLAND — On June 17, protesters blockaded the local Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) headquarters and established an occupation outside the building that over the next 10 days morphed into a mini-city with 90 tents, a hydration station, a medical tent and a children's tent. As The Indy goes to press, Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler is refusing to dismantle the encampment. Similar occupations have since popped up outside ICE headquarters in other cities.

The drama playing out right now is not just about detained families and their fate. It's about what kind of society we want to be. Amid wars, so-called failed states and above all climate change, the 21st century will be a century of unprecedented human migration. How will we respond?

From the time he rode down the escalator at Trump Tower to announce his presidential candidacy, Donald Trump has appealed to the racist paranoia of his Make America White Again followers. Now that the cruelty of his policies has ignited widespread revulsion, another more inclusive vision of who we can be is being advanced.

Welcoming the Central American refugees is the smart thing to do. In time they will contribute much to our society. More important, it's the right thing to do. It also gives us a chance to reckon with the history that brought them here and begin to take responsibility for it. When we embrace the refugee, we embrace the best in ourselves. Love trumps hate, as the saying goes. But only if we make it happen.

IN PALESTINE, GO TO HOSPITAL, GO TO JAIL

By JACLYNN ASHLY

Mohammad Abu Habsah, 18 years old, spent nearly two weeks at a hospital in Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank after Israeli forces shot him with live ammunition during protests three years ago. Bullets fired by an Israeli sniper struck him in both legs as he attempted to run away after clashes broke out between Palestinian demonstrators and the Israeli army.

Other protesters carried Abu Habsah, then 15, away, bringing him to the Arab Rehabilitation Hospital in northern Bethlehem, where he received treatment for 12 days. The day he was released from the hospital after undergoing surgery, Israeli forces raided his home in Bethlehem's Dheisheh refugee camp.

It was 3 a.m.

Abu Habsah recalls being awoken by an Is-

the cooperation of members of Palestinian society who collaborate with Israeli authorities for a host of reasons.

"The fact that Palestinians are injured is taken most often by the Israeli army as a de facto admission of guilt," Yusef told *The Indy*. "The fact that you have been hit by a rubber bullet or live ammunition means you must have been present at the protests."

However, rubber bullets and live ammunition are often used by Israel as a means of crowd dispersal. Therefore, many bystanders can also be injured and fall onto Israel's radar when seeking medical assistance. Israeli authorities have also been known to withhold medical treatment from injured detainees in order to use it as leverage to coerce Palestinians into cooperating during interrogations, Yusef said.

During his 18-day detention, prison officials did not change Abu Habsah's bandages, causing his wound to become infected. Then, three days

A year after the teen was injured, Israeli forces finally came. Conducting an overnight raid, they ransacked Raghad's room and said they had found pieces of weapons — an allegation Raghad, now 22, and his family vehemently deny. He has since been held in Israel's Ofer detention center near Ramallah in the occupied West Bank and was charged in May with illegally possessing weapons and sentenced to three years.

In prison, he continues to suffer from his injuries, his mother says, explaining that one of the nails that doctors inserted into his leg to hold it together has broken. Her son needs treatment in order to fix it but prison officials have refused to transfer Raghad to a hospital.

"He is still recovering," his mother says. "It's very difficult for him to balance and he falls over a lot. His body is still sensitive and weak."

WOUNDED &

CAPTURED: Jihan

Shamroukh with a photo of her imprisoned son Raghad.



JACLYNN ASHLY

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Abu Habsah recalls being awoken by an Israeli army commander, who squeezed his leg directly in the location of one of his bullet wounds while he was sleeping in his bed. The soldiers refused to allow Abu Habsah to take his crutches or his medicine with him, the teen said. "One of the soldiers carried me over his shoulder for a few minutes. Then he just dropped me and I fell to the ground. I kept telling them to help me, but the soldiers ignored me. I was forced to limp by myself."

The Palestinian youth was handcuffed, blindfolded and driven away in a jeep. Owing to his injuries, the soldiers brought him to an Israeli military hospital where staff gave the injured teen aspirin and wrapped a bandage around one of his wounds before transferring him to an interrogation center in Gush Etzion — an Israeli settlement bloc in the occupied West Bank built in violation of international law.

There, Abu Habsah was interrogated for almost two weeks. "I was in so much pain at the time," he told *The Independent*. "They kept asking me about my injuries and where I sustained them."

Yet before his captors even examined him, Abu Habsah says they knew the details of his injuries: "They even knew the exact locations where I had been shot."

Dawoud Yusef, the advocacy coordinator for the Palestinian prisoners' rights group, Addameer, says Abu Habsah's experiences are common among Palestinians in the occupied West Bank. During protests or clashes, mostly young Palestinians pelt rocks and the occasional Molotov cocktail at Israeli soldiers, who shoot tear gas, rubber bullets and live ammunition at the protesters.

Palestinians are often arrested by Israeli forces after sustaining injuries during protests and Israeli authorities collect intelligence on Palestinians who seek medical treatment, often with

present at the protest. However, rubber bullets and live ammunition are often used by Israel as a means of crowd dispersal. Therefore, many bystanders can also be injured and fall onto Israel's radar when seeking medical assistance. Israeli authorities have also been known to withhold medical treatment from injured detainees in order to use it as leverage to coerce Palestinians into cooperating during interrogations, Yusef said.

During his 18-day detention, prison officials did not change Abu Habsah's bandages, causing his wound to become infected. Then, three days after he was released from custody, Israeli forces raided the Dheisheh camp — a near nightly occurrence in the West Bank — and released live ammunition on its residents. He was shot again in his left leg.

Abu Habsah, who was forced to dropout of school owing to his injuries, says many of his friends are reluctant to seek treatment for wounds sustained by Israeli forces, fearing that they too will become the target of arrest.

He is just one of the countless young Palestinians in the Dheisheh camp who have been injured, arrested or killed by Israel.

When Jihan Shamroukh's son, Raghad, was shot in the leg by Israeli forces three years ago during a predawn raid into Dheisheh, he was taken to Jerusalem's Hadassah Medical Center nine miles away. The 19-year-old spent a month handcuffed to a hospital bed. Upon his release, Israeli soldiers told the teen that he would be permitted to return to his home in Dheisheh, but once he was healed they would come to arrest him, according to Jihan's recollection.

Raghad began to slowly heal, she said, making his way from the bed to crutches. But as he got better, his family knew the day that Israeli forces would arrest him was approaching closer.

"Each night, we would all wear our day clothes, in case the soldiers came," Jihan told *The Indy* as she clutched a photo of Raghad in her hands. "Before Raghad would sleep, he would place his boots beside his bed. He thought at any moment the soldiers would come to take him."

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"He is still recovering," his mother says. "It's very difficult for him to balance and he falls over a lot. His body is still sensitive and weak."

Yet while Jihan constantly worries about her son's condition in Israeli prison, she feels grateful that he is still breathing. Raghad's friend, 21-year-old Raed al-Salhi, was shot multiple

PALESTINIAN INJURIES ARE TAKEN BY THE ISRAELI ARMY AS A DE FACTO ADMISSION OF GUILT.

times during an Israeli army raid in 2016 and succumbed to his wounds a month later.

"Raed was like a son to me," she said, glancing at Raghad's photograph. "When he was killed I cried so hard for him and his family. I thank God that my son will be able to return home one day, but for Raed and others who have been killed, they will never be able to come back to their families. The suffering never stops here."

An Israeli army spokesperson denied the allegations raised in this article.

WILL THE TRUMP/KIM BROMANCE MAKE THE WORLD SAFER?

BY MARK HAIM

Donald Trump's boosters are still cheering his nuclear summit with Kim Jong-Un. Some are even talking about a Nobel Peace Prize. Many Democrats, on the other hand, are calling Trump out for, as they see it, giving away the store. They argue that he gave Kim credibility and a long-sought cancellation of war games on the North's border while essentially offering nothing more than a vague promise to "denuclearize" — whatever that means — at some uncertain time in the future.

The U.S. peace movement has for decades worked to free the world of the scourge of nuclear weapons but has profoundly disagreed with the Trump administration on almost every front. Can, or should, peace advocates and their progressive allies support Trump's supposed détente with the North? Moreover,

nuclear-weapons capabilities. These actions are fueling a new arms race with Russia and China. This is very costly, dangerous and completely unnecessary.

And this "do as I say, not as I do" double standard creates an incentive for non-nuclear states to develop weapons and obtain a deterrent to discourage aggression like the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 or the U.S.-led NATO assault on Libya in 2011. Both of these regime-change wars have devastated the countries they ostensibly were out to help and left them embroiled in violent internal conflict to this day.

NORTH KOREA IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

It also might help to recall that as many as three million North Koreans were killed in the 1950-53 Korean War, about 20 percent of the population. The United States dropped more than half a million tons

have a Nuclear Button, but it is a much bigger & more powerful one than his, and my Button works!"

Measured against the pushing-to-the-brink-of-nuclear-war position we were in 2017, Trump's current diplomacy with North Korea is a big improvement. Even if the results of their summit were more photo-op than substance, it is far better to be sitting down and talking, than it is to be threatening what should be unthinkable, launching a nuclear war.

The joint statement signed at the end of the summit is quite vague. It includes a pledge that the "DPRK commits to work toward complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula" but there is no explanation as to what "complete denuclearization" means, on what timeline it would be attained or how it would be verified. There is also no indication whether "complete denuclearization" includes the removal of nuclear-armed U.S. military forces from South Korea or the waters surrounding Korea. As such, this is pretty hol-



DANIEL FISHEL

for, as they see it, giving away the store. They argue that he gave Kim credibility and a long-sought cancellation of war games on the North's border while essentially offering nothing more than a vague promise to "denuclearize" — whatever that means — at some uncertain time in the future.

The U.S. peace movement has for decades worked to free the world of the scourge of nuclear weapons but has profoundly disagreed with the Trump administration on almost every front. Can, or should, peace advocates and their progressive allies support Trump's supposed détente with the North? Moreover, should they support denuclearization if it only entails North Korea surrendering its modest arsenal, when the movement has, for decades, demanded that nukes be abolished, mutually, verifiably and universally? And, as always, there is the question of how we get from here to there.

Consider: Our government and those of other nuclear-armed states are universally opposed to nuclear proliferation — the spread of atomic weapons to currently non-nuclear states — but have been steadfastly opposed to giving up their own nuclear capabilities. When the so-called "Ban Treaty," which would outlaw all nuclear weapons, came before the United Nations last summer, 123 nations supported it (out of 178), but not one of the nine nuclear-armed states got on board.

It is also worthy of note that the United States is legally bound by the Non-Proliferation Treaty, signed in 1968 and ratified in 1970. Ratified treaties are, under the U.S. Constitution, deemed "the highest law of the land," but our government consistently ignores Article VI, which reads:

Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

The United States, however, has not taken the treaty seriously, except to use it to pressure non-nuclear states. In fact, through its periodic "nuclear posture reviews," it has made clear its intention to maintain a nuclear arsenal in perpetuity. And our government has adopted a \$1.2 trillion plan to "modernize" its

led NATO assault on Libya in 2011. Both of these regime-change wars have devastated the countries they ostensibly were out to help and left them embroiled in violent internal conflict to this day.

NORTH KOREA IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

It also might help to recall that as many as three million North Koreans were killed in the 1950-53 Korean War, about 20 percent of the population. The United States dropped more than half a million tons of bombs on the North, as well as napalm. As Air Force General Curtis LeMay, head of the Strategic Air Command during the Korean War, put it, "We went over there and fought the war and eventually burned down every town in North Korea."

Almost no North Korean family went unscathed. This helps explain their animosity toward and fear of the United States and why they find the huge U.S.-South Korean war games right on their doorstep threatening. It is always possible that, under the pretense of an exercise, their adversaries could launch a surprise attack.

TRUMP ON KOREA

Donald Trump's foreign policy has ranged from erratic, at best, to very destructive. He has pulled the United States out of the Paris climate accord and the Iran nuclear agreement, two important steps forward undertaken under President Barack Obama. And, in moving the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, he has inflamed the Israel-Palestine conflict even further. He has insulted foreign leaders, including major U.S. allies, while heaping high praise on brutal despots. He's continued and expanded current wars and threatened new ones. And it seems like he sees one of his main jobs on the world stage as being an arms salesman, hawking the wares of the military-industrial complex hither and yon.

Perhaps the most disconcerting moments of his presidency came in his war of words with North Korea in 2017. He threatened that the North Koreans "will be met with fire and the fury like the world has never seen" and tauntingly dismissed Kim Jong-Un as "little rocket man" and "a sick puppy." He not only threatened to unleash a nuclear attack that would "totally destroy North Korea" but in an adolescent (and cartoonishly symbolic) outburst he stated, "I too

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The joint statement signed at the end of the summit is quite vague. It includes a pledge that the "DPRK commits to work toward complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula" but there is no explanation as to what "complete denuclearization" means, on what timeline it would be attained or how it would be verified. There is also no indication whether "complete denuclearization" includes the removal of nuclear-armed U.S. military forces from South Korea or the waters surrounding Korea. As such, this is pretty hollow rhetoric. But hollow rhetoric is an improvement over bellicose rhetoric.

Trump has also come in for significant criticism for "giving without getting." It is noted that he agreed to cancel U.S.-South Korean joint military exercises with no corresponding concession by the North Koreans. In point of fact, these exercises, or war games, should never have been held in the first place. As Trump noted, they are "provocative." Mobilizing tens of thousands of troops, on land, in the air and on the sea and staging mock invasions close to the border of another country is clearly unacceptable and, due to the ambiguous nature of the mobilization, could easily be suspected of providing cover for an actual military assault. Imagine how the United States would have reacted during the Cold War if Cuba and the Soviet Union held similar exercises off the coast of Florida.

WHAT DO THE KOREAN PEOPLE WANT?

While it is hard to know what the people of North Korea want, as it is not an open society, we know from multiple polls that the overwhelming majority of South Koreans want an end to the tensions, a peace treaty ending the Korean War, mutual recognition and steps toward disarmament. In fact, a recent poll indicated that 88 percent of South Koreans support the April 27 Panmunjom Declaration, which calls for peace between the two Koreas and steps toward disarmament. Their wishes seem to dovetail with those of many in the Korean diaspora, which were laid out in a pre-summit statement of unity by Korean Americans and allies.

Will North Korea disarm? Time will tell. But it is, of course, not just up to the North Korean leadership. A lot depends upon how they perceive the intentions

Continued on page 15

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HISTORY
STATES

Law and
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MUSIC

HER TRUTH

BY CAMILLE MAY BAKER

In 2009, the singer-songwriter Shea Diamond was released after serving a 10-year sentence at a series of men's prisons in Michigan for armed robbery. She committed the robbery, she says, in order to procure funds for a gender-affirming surgery.

Diamond (whose first name is pronounced "SHE-uh") has come a long way since then. Her first EP, *Seen It All* (Asylum Records) was produced by songwriter Justin Tranter who has worked with Justin Bieber, Linkin Park and Gwen Stefani among others and is due out June 29. The first single from the record, a sexy-soulful-amplified take on colorism, "Keisha Complexion," was released in May.

The Independent reached Diamond by phone in Los Angeles where she now lives. We discussed her new EP and her experiences as a transgender woman in prison where she wrote her first song, a somber and probing feminist anthem about tackling adversity, "I Am Her."

THE INDEPENDENT: You talk about how you've always

made sure my breasts didn't stand out too much, made sure my hips didn't stand out too much. I wore glasses that made me look a little bit more androgynous.

If I dressed as my truth, I would get stopped on the bus on the way to transferring to the new facility. The wardens themselves would come out and say, "No, you're not coming to my facility." It's humiliating and degrading. You're handcuffed. And then get there, and to be rejected and told "You're too feminine. You're a man. That's what we want you to clearly identify yourself as, but you don't look the part. So we cannot have you interrupting the normal operations of this place."

It was a double-edged sword. There was no way for you to win.

To what extent were you able to make music while you were incarcerated?

For me, music was my escape. They give me my TOP/LOP for nothing. They thought I was crazy. I was singing and writing songs and stuff. They put me in segregation — I was still smiling when I came out. I found a joy in everything. When



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THE INDEPENDENT July 2018

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The Independent reached Diamond by phone in Los Angeles where she now lives. We discussed her new EP and her experiences as a transgender woman in prison where she wrote her first song, a somber and probing feminist anthem about tackling adversity, “I Am Her.”

THE INDEPENDENT: *You talk about how you’ve always identified as female, even when you were a child. I read that your mother used to whisper in your ear as you were singing in the church choir that your voice was too high. What’s your relationship to music like?*

SHEA DIAMOND: For me, music is the *Essence*. It’s just as close to me as my breath. And so music to me was just like the thing that saved my life. If I wasn’t able to hum, if I wasn’t able to sing little notes, I don’t know if I would be able to have made it through those rough times. Sometimes I needed to sing myself to sleep. When I was incarcerated, that was a very difficult moment for me and I needed some additional strength.

It seems like that’s where you really began to come into your own as an artist.

I began to actually write more aggressively. I began to write down my feelings about the church, about my sexuality, about my identity — just about everything in life. And just about experiences I had in relationships and all that stuff. I started to figure out how to make the best version of a song I could, not having any idea of structure.

It must have been a challenge being a trans woman in a men’s prison.

I began to be punished within the system for my femininity. What happens inside is you introduce a trans woman into a masculine world. Being that you hold the secondary feminine sexual characteristics of a male female, that presents a security issue. You become a threat to the safety of the institution. They don’t want you on the compound, so lot of times they punish you by keeping you on “loss of privileges” or “termination of privileges.” You stay on “TOP/LOP” a lot. They have you in protective segregation. Your femininity is always under attack.

I would come into certain facilities and tone down my femininity. I made sure I didn’t have any homemade makeup on,

feminine. You’re a man. That’s what we want you to clearly identify yourself as, but you don’t look the part. So we cannot have you interrupting the normal operations of this place.”

It was a double-edged sword. There was no way for you to win.

To what extent were you able to make music while you were incarcerated?

For me, music was my escape. They give me my TOP/LOP for nothing. They thought I was crazy. I was singing and writing songs and stuff. They put me in segregation — I was still smiling when I came out. I found a joy in everything. When I was in segregation, I found acoustics. Although I couldn’t see anybody, they could hear me. So I was able to sing “I Am Her.” I had the inmates in there singing “I Am Her.” It was like a party up in there. I would lay on the floor and sing. You know, it took away the hours that you spent in there, the days you spent in there, the months that you spent in there. To the point that you lost sight of the calendar days.

*So you have an EP coming out June 29, *Seen It All*.*

I’m so excited! It has a lot of good beats and stuff that the people who are behind the music have thrown in there. It’s like a little bit of everything. There’s just, like, a special bit of love in the project, just some extra magic that was added.

Tell us about your first single off the record. What was the genesis behind it?

“Keisha Complexion” is glorifying the dark complexion. The forgotten-about complexion. For so long, access to the world of beauty has only been available to light skin. So “Keisha Complexion” is revamping the word “ebony” and giving a twist to the words “ebony complexion.”

There has been like a bit of a backlash from “Keisha Complexion,” which is very surprising. The backlash that comes is: “Is that a man?” So, I would just like to address that once and for all: Trans people are who they say they are.

Why would you be so rude, why would you be so malicious, as to call a woman wearing a dress, calling herself “her” — her pronouns being “she” and “her” — why would you wait to call her “female”? Now that I’m living my truth, now why am I a man?

This interview has been lightly edited for clarity and concision.

EAST HARLEM TENANTS

Continued from page 7

the process of being renovated. The sole remaining tenant said he was leaving at the end of the month. He hadn't had gas for months and was tired of cooking on a hotplate.

Tenants in multiple ArchRock-Emerald Equity buildings in East Harlem described similar efforts to get them out. The strategy appears to be two-pronged: render living conditions unbearable and then offer tenants buyouts or relocation to Emerald Equity properties in the Bronx or Yonkers.

From 2014 to 2016, before Emerald Equity acquired the Dawnay Day buildings, HPD filed 36 lawsuits demanding that their owners make repairs or correct violations. The department has since filed 74 such suits, more than twice as many, against Emerald.

In April, reporters confronted an ArchRock employee

outside its East Harlem office, asking him about the status of the 17 HPD lawsuits still pending. "Which lawsuit?" the man, dressed in business casual attire with a Bluetooth headset affixed to his ear, responded, telling the reporters they could expect a call from "the guy you met on the street" before disappearing into the cellar.

Repeatedly asking a tenant to leave their home after they have declined a buyout, or trying to buy tenants out without a formal written offer, are both illegal. But it is a tactic that often works, is highly profitable when it does and poses a problem for tenant organizers who can't keep pace with the buyout mill.

"The same person has knocked on my door six times since Christmas, offering me money or the Bronx," said Edgar Gonzaga, 32, who has lived at 322 East 117th all his life. He pointed at gaping holes in his floor and ceiling where a gas pipe was installed after the gas line broke, leaving he and his family unable to cook. "They're trying to make us miser-

able," he said. "They know if they renovated this apartment, they could get \$3,000 a month. I pay \$1,068."

María Martínez accepted \$22,000 to leave the one-bedroom apartment in East Harlem that has been her home for 18 years. She said the last straw was when ArchRock told her that the rent would increase from \$1,392 to \$1,500. If Emerald Equity can rent it to a new tenant for \$3,000, it would recoup the \$22,000 it spent buying her out in about 14 months.

Martínez says she would have rather have stayed in her apartment, "with my friends nearby," but she moved to Pennsylvania with her husband and daughter in May.

"They're emptying the buildings faster than we can organize them," says Crystal Vizcaíno.

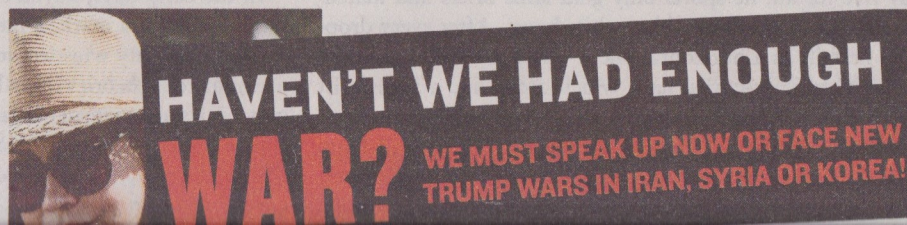
IMMIGRANT FAMILY

Continued from page 8

summer, what I'm planning to do is buy the books for microbiology and another sort of biology class — to start to read and learn the material and do something in my free time. If I've got some," she says.

sure. If you ask me, my health is really, really bad."

"It's important to speak up about what's happening and how we suffer, so that maybe people can understand the realities of our communities," she continues. "We can't stay quiet, we can't stop moving. We have to move. We have to do something. That's why I have decided to tell my story."



IMMIGRANT FAMILY

Continued from page 8

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But she needs financial aid, and the family's economic status depends on whether Juan can stay in the United States. He was released from detention in early June, but his future is uncertain.

"Sometimes I feel so depressed, but then I remind myself that I'm fortunate as a mother, as a student, as a wife," Ana says. "I can't give up. Because if I give up, my whole family falls. It's a lot of pres-

sure. If you ask me, my health is really, really bad."

"It's important to speak up about what's happening and how we suffer, so that maybe people can understand the realities of our communities," she continues. "We can't stay quiet, we can't stop moving. We have to move. We have to do something. That's why I have decided to tell my story."

Note: Shortly before The Indy went to press, Ana's husband Juan was released from detention but will have to reappear in court. He returned to work the next day. Their son Michael will be able to attend his first semester of college.

KOREA NUKES

Continued from page 13


of the United States. They would clearly be more likely to make moves in that direction if they saw a de-escalation of tensions and U.S. moves toward making peace. On the other hand, seeing the United States reject other agreements, including the Iran nuclear agreement and the Paris climate accords, does not help. If Donald Trump really wants a Nobel Peace Prize, he will clearly have to do more than just have one meeting gushing praise on an autocratic leader. The

United States will have to do its part to create an atmosphere of mutual trust.

And liberals and those on the left, while standing firm against Trump's over-all agenda, need to recognize that, just as a stopped clock tells the right time a couple of times a day, some of Trump's actions could be worth applauding. Bernie Sanders gets this and, in a prepared statement, while noting it was "very light on substance," he declared the Singapore meeting "a positive step in de-escalating tensions between our countries, addressing the threat of North Korea's

nuclear weapons and moving toward a more peaceful future." He further stated, "Congress has a key role to play in making sure this is a meaningful process, not just a series of photo ops." If you agree, please urge others to support steps to peace.

Mark Haim is a longtime advocate for peace, justice, sustainability and climate action. He serves as director of Mid-Missouri Peaceworks, a grassroots activist group.



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A WRESTLER'S LIFE

BY PHILIP YIANNPOULOS

It's Saturday night inside a Knights of Columbus event hall in Ridgefield Park, New Jersey and The Dagger Mik Drake is here to wrestle. Various colored paper streamers and fishing line — decorations from parties past — dangle from the ceiling. In the center of the room, a freshly assembled 15-square-foot wrestling ring quietly waits to be relevant. The black fiber ropes that surround it are taut, ready for performers to cling to them as if for their very lives.

Around the room devotees clump together, wearing T-shirts supporting The Ugly Ducklings, The Fraternity, Danny Moff — some of the crowd's favorites. A concession booth does business in one corner of the hall. Its menu, scrawled in a side-winding hand, offers potato chips, pretzels and pink hot dogs served on Bunny Bread buns. A man with a goatee changes seats a few times and eventually settles on a spot that will later force him to whisk his small son out of the aerial path of what may be an Abercrombie & Fitch model in bright purple spandex. The Pabst Blue Ribbon knocked over in the process only adds to the excitement.

Some fans have zealously followed the melodrama of the Battle Club Pro league and its earlier incarnations for decades. They cheer and boo the cultural descendants of circus folk and competitive brawlers that created America's unique pastime of "sports entertainment." The rest of us are just catching up.

When The Dagger takes the ring for his part in a three-way free-for-all, he sports only gold lamé briefs and matching knee pads above his shiny white boots. After every drop-kick, he falls as a horizontal line — his body just faster than his mane of tight-curved hair, which drops like a Cousin Itt over muscles regularly treated with L'Oréal Sublime Bronzer. His entire 246-pound body slams against one inch of foam padding above a bed of two-by-twelve wooden planks spanning structural iron trusses. He continues wrestling through

two rivals in Madison Square Garden, patriotic chants of U-S-A! U-S-A! erupted throughout the venue. Twenty-nine years later, in that same arena, Donald Trump was inducted into the pro-wrestling Hall of Fame, smiling amid a torrent of boos. Five years after that, the same U-S-A chant that once greeted Sergeant Slaughter rang through the halls of Congress during Trump's first State of the Union address.

To date, the current lonely behemoth in televised wrestling, WWE, still builds characters up just to tear them down. The Mexicools ride to matches on lawnmowers while Cryme Tyme, two black guys who steal stuff from other wrestlers, exist to "parody racial stereotypes," according to their website. But such parodies exist because there is a market for them, a market exploited by Trump when he carved a path to the White House by describing Mexican immigrants as murderers and rapists and tweeting out fake black-on-white crime statistics.

...

"THE BEST CHARACTER is the one that is yourself, but with the volume turned up," Mik Drake explains with hard-earned wrestling-world wisdom.

There's a word for this: kayfabe. It defines wrestling's brand of suspension of disbelief, the protection of both melodramatic narratives and the physical moves that create the fighting illusion.

In the early days, kayfabe was the carnival worker's code word for when a mark, a member of the crowd, was nearby, warning off-duty wrestlers to hop back into character. There are numerous theories regarding the word's origin. Some suggest it is a portmanteau homage to Kay Fabian, a mythical old-time wrestler who may or may not have ever existed. Another theory states the term derives from the British phrase "keep cavey" or be on the lookout. Regardless of its origin, the code



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"Am I screwin' up by not going down the, you know, General Life 101 path?" The Dagger, who has been wrestling for twelve years and working as a lawyer for nine, muses later. Yet such doubts pass quickly. His environmental law job in Manhattan serves only as a safety net, something to support him until he makes it to the big time: World Wrestling Entertainment, Inc., the WWE.

• • •

MODERN PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING began to coalesce in America when the Civil War forced men of different backgrounds into military camps around the country. The bivouac tedium punctuated by hunger, disease, death and gambling led to the competitions and, in effect, the melding of fighting styles. Thus met the tripping maneuvers of the Vermonters, the *free-for-all* and its nasty, Western Frontier *rough-and-tumble* cousin, the classical *Greco-Roman*, the innovative Cornish *side-hold*, the gentlemanly antebellum *upright* and the Irish *collar-and-elbow*.

As the initial democratic system of fighters competing essentially at random failed to draw audiences, a need for larger-than-life characters arose. Showmanship, more than ability, sold seats. That could mean having an enormous or deformed physical presence, charisma to rival Casanova or enough Bible recall to impress the masses. And what's a hero without a villain? Beginning in the 1880s, as wrestling evolved from the traveling carnival scene, promoters discovered melodramatic feuds were the most dependable way to sell tickets. Of those narratives, the most marketable was whatever form of xenophobia was in vogue at the time. Racism worked, too.

This model, a century later, led to creations like The Iron Sheik in 1980 — just months after the Iranian hostage crisis — and his nemesis, Sergeant Slaughter, a balding cross between Smokey the Bear and the drill instructor from *Full Metal Jacket*. The Sheik was a popular love-to-hate heel, directed to stir up anti-Iranian sentiment. During a 1984 match between the

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In the early days, kayfabe was the carnival worker's code word for when a mark, a member of the crowd, was nearby, warning off-duty wrestlers to hop back into character. There are numerous theories regarding the word's origin. Some suggest it is a portmanteau homage to Kay Fabian, a mythical old-time wrestler who may or may not have ever existed. Another theory states the term derives from the British phrase "keep cavey," or be on the lookout. Regardless of its origin, the code survived through a century of American wrestling's ups and downs, its vagabond circus days, the meager turnouts through the Great Depression, the subsequent post-war Golden Age, the televised oversaturation that led to the sport's decline in the 1960s and early '70s and its rebirth when the WWE began to monopolize the national market in the following decade.

During the Vietnam era, when America watched its children being slaughtered in the jungles of Vietnam (and alternately doing the slaughtering), wrestling performers and fans began the sustained wink that carries through to today. The intention behind kayfabe morphed from protecting industry secrets into a tacit agreement between audience and performer that artifice spawned from even the smallest kernel of truth is more entertaining than reality. The public's appetite for a story grew with its ability to bite into it. Superstar Hulk Hogan, for instance, boasts a ten-inch penis, yet the man who portrays him, Terry Bollea, has conceded his endowment is more modest in nature.

With everyone in on the game, pointing out non-sequiturs and logical plot holes equates to narrative murder. In the wrestling universe, individuals have gone to extreme lengths to protect kayfabe. Take, for instance, Nelson Scott Simpson's years-long dedication to his character "The Russian Nightmare," Nikita Koloff, that involved legally changing his name and hiring an "interpreter" to translate his remarks when he spoke in public. (Simpson was born in Minnesota.)

Likewise, today, our political moment craves melodrama. Talking heads speculate on the next act of porn stars and former FBI directors. We don't want facts but moral conclusions. Fans of the president crave a 1,933 mile-long wall that would cost billions of dollars — passionately arguing for it while aware that it will probably never happen. Kayfabe guides our current age of political amusement but wrestling fans were there first, perennially happy to find a reason to pull their hair out and shout, "How could he do that?"

Yet, while parallels abound between wrestling and politics, one defines itself as entertainment and the other currently only acts as such. Fans of wrestling are lawyers, journalists, police





GINO BARZIZZA

officers — citizens on all sides of the political spectrum. They are fans because it's fun and harmless entertainment. But things get murkier when we begin treating entertainment as real and the real as imaginary. In this moment, when people yell until they feel things are true, swapping truth for kayfabe passion, it is easy for the real to be obscured behind spectacle.

• • •

THE DAGGER MIK DRAKE wears a suit to work at his environmental law firm where he writes legal briefs on a computer that runs on a buggy version of Microsoft Windows. In the office, none of The Dagger's coworkers know about his double life. He keeps it secret to avoid the headache of questions he's faced before when word of his other identity spread around previous office water coolers: *Hey, so where do you get the little outfits? How do those boots feel? So when am I going to see you on TV?*

He compares his love of wrestling to his colleagues' weekend hobbies like acting, playing soccer, writing poems. "It just so happens that this one involves me in my underpants, jumping around and fake fighting other grown men," he says.

However, as far as The Dagger sees it, no one else at the office aspires to be on Broadway, win the World Cup or a Nobel prize for Literature — not in the way he wants to be a professional wrestler. He recently turned down a promotion at work so he could keep up with his workouts and the related cryotherapy and sports massages he undergoes to stay in shape.

When The Dagger enters Trader Joe's in Manhattan he makes a b-line for the frozen grass-fed beef burgers and jasmine white rice, ignoring creative displays aimed at those with a desire for flavor before fuel. His daily intake — with the exception of a post-workout protein shake — consists of 800 grams of rice and 400 grams of cut-up

patties. The Dagger rarely goes out on dates and never drinks alcohol. He is cultivating his inner wrestling self — uber competitive, "almost to a sociopathic level," he says.

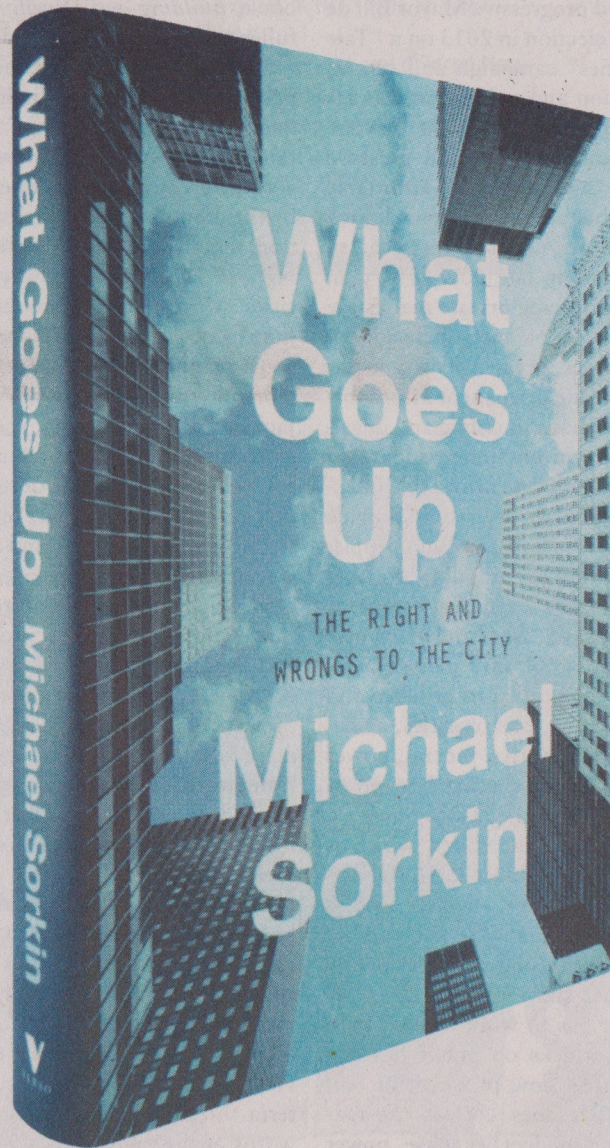
After the Battle Club Pro match, The Dagger arrives home to his tiny, shared apartment in Manhattan. He turns on the TV and reviews tape of his performance so he can get better and eventually go pro. He's been in talks with the WWE but nothing has been inked yet. It's only a matter of time, he believes. If not the WWE, perhaps he can make it big in the All Japan Pro Wrestling league. "Wrestling is unlike other sports," he says. "You tend to peak later, 35 to 40, think back to, like, Hulk Hogan."

The Dagger eventually lies down on the futon he uses for a bed in the living room that doubles as a kitchen. The room around him is sparse, its white walls mostly barren. A poster of Rocky Balboa triumphantly raising his fist in the air hangs across the room from his bed. This is a place of transition — why would The Dagger spend time decorating when he could be leaving for Florida or Tokyo or Los Angeles any day now?

If asked about the bruises and cuts on his face at the office on Monday, he has a go-to response ready. "I'm in a fight club, like in the movie, but I can't talk about it," he'll say, then add with a laugh, "It's from pickup basketball." He is happy to let them choose the truth that suits them.



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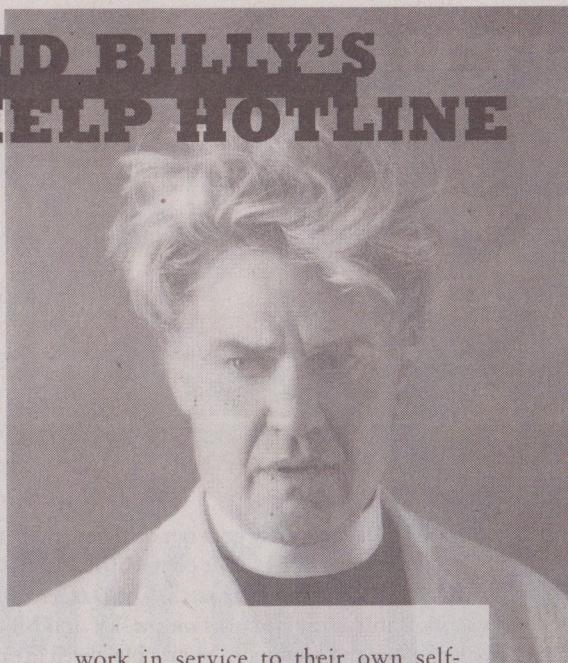
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REVEREND BILLY'S TRUMP HELP HOTLINE



JONQUILTY

Dear Rev,
Images of those migrant children Trump locked up are all over the news. I'm worried they'll disturb my 11-year-old but I'm also thinking it could be a good segue into activism for him. Any suggestions on how to talk to him about the issue?

— MARJORIE, Flatbush

Marjorie,
From what you reveal about your boy in this letter, I say tell it straight. The scandalized news has a way of finding all of us. Activists get the one-note, screaming-in-the-streets treatment in corporate media. Help him decrypt this stuff, so he doesn't fall into bad news habits. Give your explanation of the children his age who are in the cages. The truth shall set us free but make us feel terrible for awhile. A good parent in 2018 should help children understand what Evil is. These are not always the same villains as in video games. In real life, they are sadists who inflict terror and watch

work in service to their own self-interest. Take the environmental movement. Huge outfits like the Sierra Club and the Nature Conservancy isolate themselves in the corporate tradition. They lobby, litigate and raise money, yet are largely invisible to the general public, even as the fate of all life seems to be their job.

We live in an apocalyptic time, with scientists openly guessing at the year that modern life will collapse. What if we found ourselves in a big yoga class with the 20 million people who live in and around NYC and our instructor said, "Alright, this is our very last breath. We'll do it together now." As we took that last breath together we would realize that there is only one issue — the issue of life itself.

Alaina, it isn't so much that we need to unify social movements. We need to discover the reality that we already share.

REVEREND BILLY IS AN ACTIVIST AND POLITICAL SHOUTER, A

BOOKS

BUILDING THE CITY WE NEED

What Goes Up, The Right and Wrongs to the City

BY MICHAEL SORKIN
VERSO BOOKS 2018

Building & Dwelling

BY RICHARD SENNETT
FARRAR, STRAUS & GIROUX
2018

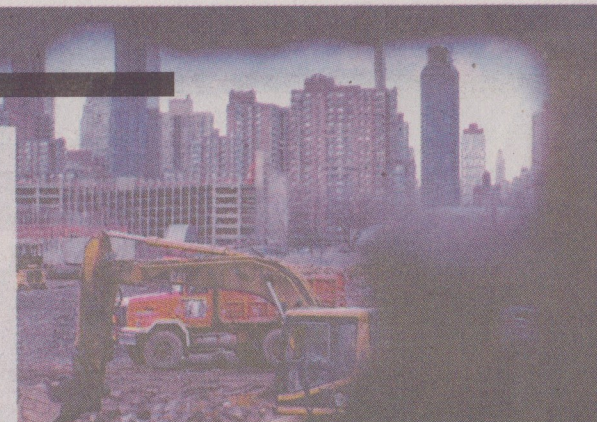
By Bennett Baumer

New Yorkers dislike many things. Subway delays. That smell during summer. But what New Yorkers really dislike is real-estate development.

That new building either blocks your view, gentrifies the block or brings *those* people to the neighborhood. Two new books on architecture and urban studies make the case for sustainable real-estate development.

City University of New York Spitzer School of Architecture professor Michael Sorkin's *What Goes Up* is a series of pithy and piquant essays on the twin problems facing New York and many other large cities: affordability and climate change.

Self-styled progressive Mayor Bill de Blasio won election in 2013 on a "Tale of Two Cities" campaign and central to his election and re-election was his



COLIN POELLIT

community participation... infrastructures of all kinds, and design."

Buildings are the largest source of greenhouse gas pollution in New York City, comprising 67 percent of total emissions. *What Goes Up* argues for requiring carbon neutrality, outlawing oil-fired boilers and vastly reducing traffic. The city already bans No. 6 oil in boilers and plans to phase out No. 4 oil by 2030, but many landlords will just switch to natural gas — another fossil fuel. Sorkin thinks deeply about architecture and design, offering hot takes on new buildings — he likes the Oculus but says it cost too much — but would do better to think about the environmental effects of building operations, such as how we will heat and cool spaces. In writing about Hurricane Sandy, Sorkin recognizes "real but painfully slow" progress on greening buildings, but warns that we may "wind up so many Canutes, bashing away with our feeble swords at the relentlessly rising seas."

What Goes Up cites urbanist Jane Jacobs and makes the requisite White Horse Tavern reference, but Columbia's Center on Capitalism and Society senior fellow Richard Sennett's new book, *Building and Dwelling*, gives a fuller treatment of Jacobs' ideas.

Sennett's urban landscape is composed of the ville (the built environment) and cité (city living). He posits

Hi Billy,
I notice how you do a lot of activism — immigrant rights, gay liberation, your environmentalism. There's so much to protest these days, sometimes it feels like we're running to put out five fires at once. How do we unite these movements? Do you see any common threads?

— ALAINA, West Village

The famous weakness on the left is our disunity. We splinter into many causes. Thousands of organizations have monetized their one issue and

streets treatment in corporate media. Help him decrypt this stuff, so he doesn't fall into bad news habits. Give your explanation of the children his age who are in the cages. The truth shall set us free but make us feel terrible for awhile. A good parent in 2018 should help children understand what Evil is. These are not always the same villains as in video games. In real life, they are sadists who inflict terror and watch nightmares grow in the faces of children. And sometimes they even believe that they are good Americans doing their duty.

And Marjorie — make it real. The imprisoned children are here in New York. We are finding them now in the Bronx, in Harlem, in Brooklyn, in New Jersey. Bring him to one of our rallies, so he can meet some of the kids his age who are now free. These survivors should be his source of news. Bring the truth to your boy because you love him. Start his education about commercial media and sentimental patriotism and fundamentalist religion. There are streams of predatory messaging coming at us from all directions. It's not an easy time to be a child of any age.

this is our very last breath. We'll do it together now." As we took that last breath together we would realize that there is only one issue — the issue of life itself.

Alaina, it isn't so much that we need to unify social movements. We need to discover the reality that we already share.

REVEREND BILLY IS AN ACTIVIST AND POLITICAL SHOUTER, A POST-RELIGIOUS PREACHER OF THE STREETS AND BANK LOBBIES. GOT A QUESTION FOR REVEREND BILLY? JUST EMAIL REV.BILLY@INDYPEN-DENT.ORG AND UNBURDEN YOUR SOUL. THE REV PERFORMS A FREE SHOW, TRUMP & EVANGELICALS GO TO HELL, WITH THE CHURCH OF STOP SHOPPING CHOIR ON TUESDAY, JUNE 5TH, 8 PM, AT STARR BAR, 214 STARR STREET IN BUSHWICK.

sustainable real-estate development. City University of New York Spitzer School of Architecture professor Michael Sorkin's *What Goes Up* is a series of pithy and piquant essays on the twin problems facing New York and many other large cities: affordability and climate change.

Self-styled progressive Mayor Bill de Blasio won election in 2013 on a "Tale of Two Cities" campaign and central to his election and re-election was his affordable-housing plan. The mayor's ten-year plan to create and preserve 200,000 "high-quality, affordable homes" is his administration's legacy project and he updated the goal to 300,000 units in late 2017. The plan depends on enticing private real-estate developers to opt into inclusionary zoning bonuses (greater density in exchange for some permanent affordable units) and billions in public and quasi-public money in low-interest loans to construct or renovate affordable housing. The plan, in theory, would provide housing for over half a million people, as many as now live in public housing or receive Section 8 rental assistance.

In his essay "Ups and Downs," Sorkin lauds de Blasio's plan, but laments that the burden to produce and preserve housing falls on cities, as decades of conservative federal power has greatly diminished public housing funding. Also, he adds, "there's a huge elephant in the room, which is the possibility — indeed, probability — that even with the complete success of [de Blasio's plan], the net number of affordable housing units in the city will fall, and substantially." The city government has to work against both right-wing attacks on public housing and the state's slow phaseout of rent regulations. It does not set the federal housing budget or have power over the rent laws. That leaves a city mayor with only zoning incentives and municipal money to entice affordable housing production. Sorkin proposes Jane Jacobs-style "incremental change,

away with our feeble swords at the relentlessly rising seas."

What Goes Up cites urbanist Jane Jacobs and makes the requisite White Horse Tavern reference, but Columbia's Center on Capitalism and Society senior fellow Richard Sennett's new book, *Building and Dwelling*, gives a fuller treatment of Jacobs' ideas.

Sennett's urban landscape is composed of the ville (the built environment) and cité (city living). He posits that these two concepts became divorced, creating closed cities marked by the dominance of vehicles, segregation, regimentation and control. *Building and Dwelling* seeks ways to open cities. Most people know the story of Jane Jacobs' criticism of Robert Moses' mega-planning schemes, but Sennett is more interested in the rivalry between Jacobs and mid-century socialist architectural critic Lewis Mumford. Jacobs championed local decision-making, gradual development, "eyes on the street" to combat crime and spontaneous street life à la her beloved low-rise Greenwich Village. Mumford thought that stressing local decision-making and action could not address the scale of New York City, as infrastructure projects that affect the entire city need more than a "bottom-up, cellular framework." He argued for garden cities and democratic-socialist planning for all aspects of people's lives (health, shelter and work).

Building and Dwelling can at times be opaque and perhaps even "incoherent," as Sennett himself has acknowledged. The author writes of the *flâneur* meandering through a city, taking it all in, and at times the book meanders. He does, however, address the long-term threat of climate change — and warns against what he calls "stoicism of the bad sort, i.e. try nothing because nothing can be done."

THE BOYS ARE BACK ON BROADWAY

The Boys in the Band
BOOTH THEATRE (222 WEST 45TH ST.)
THROUGH AUGUST 11

By Gena Hymowech

When *The Boys in the Band* premiered off-Broadway in 1968, it was cutting edge, a realistic look at gay men written by a gay man. As Paul Rudnick put it in the documentary *Making the Boys*, “This play opened at a time when everything was still taboo.” It became a smash hit, but as Michael Musto noted in that same doc, the movie suffered from bad timing. By 1970, Stonewall had happened and modern gay men could no longer relate.

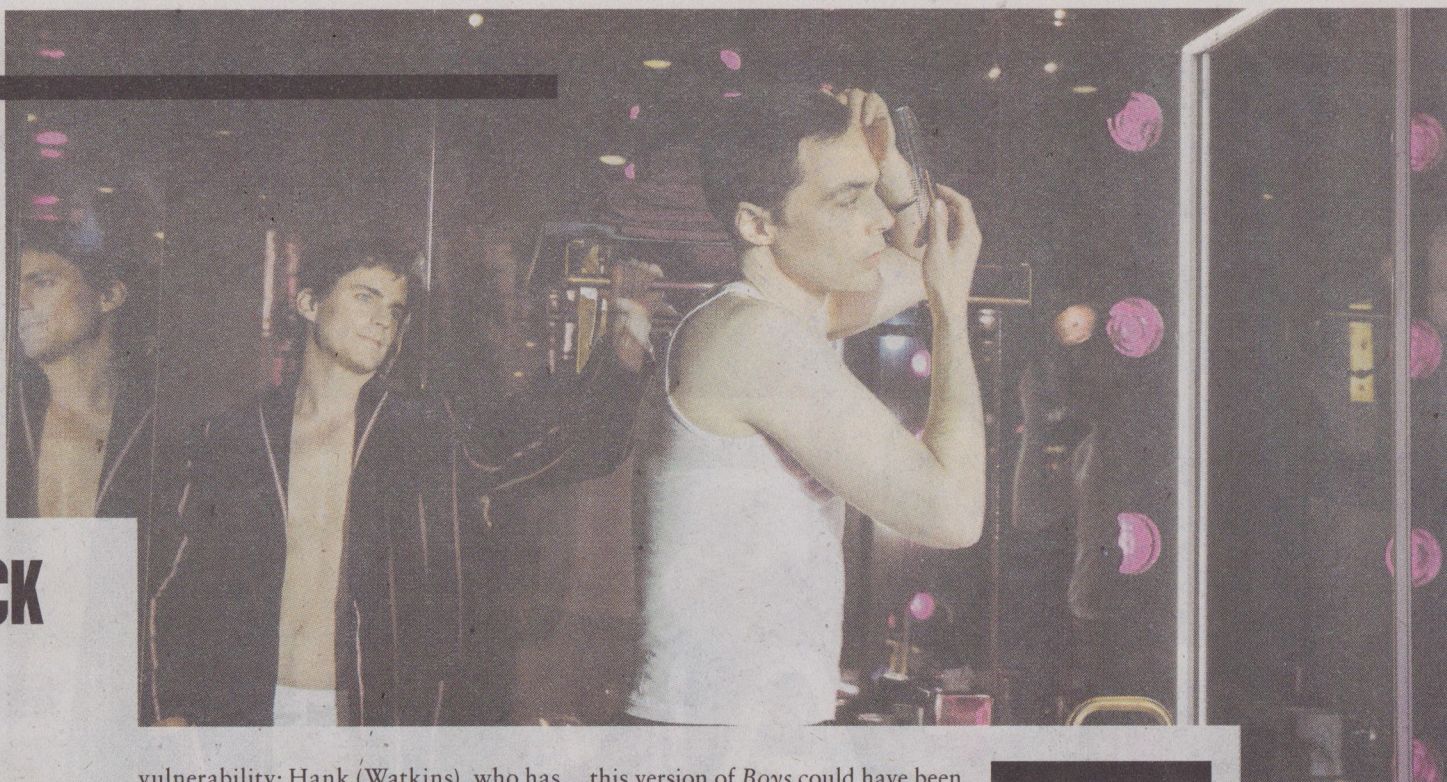
So why revive it? Well, for one, it’s a great history lesson, and for another, so many of its themes have no sell-by date: the pressure to be beautiful, self-harm, unrequited love, polyamory, addiction, suicide, the importance of friends when you’re queer. How queers socialize, how we define ourselves and how we

vulnerability; Hank (Watkins), who has left his wife; Larry (Rannells), Hank’s lover; Donald (Bomer), Michael’s loyal, neurotic friend; Cowboy (Carver), a prostitute bought for the birthday boy; Harold (Quinto), the birthday boy, “a 32-year-old ugly, pockmarked, Jew fairy”; and Alan (Hutchison), a supposedly straight friend of Michael’s.

Sadly, I never felt like the actors were totally inhabiting these well-written roles. Quinto has the unenviable task of playing a character once played by the great Leonard Frey, an actor who almost totally dominated the original movie—he was a bitchy presence you couldn’t help but love (or at least I couldn’t). Harold is Michael’s conscience and emotional babysitter. He takes a perverse pleasure in kicking Michael while he’s down. But Quinto plays him like he wouldn’t hurt a soul. He’s got the sarcasm down, but his emotional distance weakens the character. His Harold could take or leave what is happening and his angry speech to Michael at the end—the beating heart of this whole play

this version of *Boys* could have been something special that resonated with a new generation. Unfortunately, like the 1970 film, it’s out of tune, albeit for a different reason.

ATTRACTION:
Matt Bomer and Jim Parsons in *The Boys In The Band*.



JOAN MARCUS, 2018



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I've seen the film and love its humor, emotion, story and acting. I didn't even think about how negative it made gays look until more recently. I see it as a work about a particular time and a particular group of people. These men are not supposed to stand in for every gay man. If you are the kind of person who expects each gay film to act as a protest for gay rights, you may not like it. If you lived in a pre-Stonewall world or have just dealt with a lot of homophobic crap in your life, then you might feel triggered, understandably.

I personally don't think these characters are evil, and I don't think every representation of us has to be perfect. That being said, *Boys* can be uncomfortable to watch in 2018 — the amount of shame some of these men feel and the way Michael takes his anger out are admittedly just awful.

The revival stars Jim Parsons, Andrew Rannells, Zachary Quinto, Matt Bomer, Charlie Carver, Robin de Jesús, Brian Hutchison, Michael Benjamin Washington and Tuc Watkins. This new cast is out and can be so without risking losing their careers. The main challenge for them is understanding the mood of 1968 and connecting with the play's spirit. Oh, and it would be nice if they could make it their own, too.

The plot? Friends are meeting at an apartment to celebrate a birthday when all emotional hell breaks loose. They are Michael (Parsons), uptight, newly sober; Emory (de Jesús), an effeminate sort; Bernard (Washington), the only black character, whose humor and lightheartedness cover up his sadness and

tor who almost totally dominated the original movie — he was a bitchy presence you couldn't help but love (or at least I couldn't). Harold is Michael's conscience and emotional babysitter. He takes a perverse pleasure in kicking Michael while he's down. But Quinto plays him like he wouldn't hurt a soul. He's got the sarcasm down, but his emotional distance weakens the character. His Harold could take or leave what is happening and his angry speech to Michael at the end — the beating heart of this whole play — falls flat on its face.

Parsons was an excellent choice for Michael, because who is *Big Bang*'s Sheldon if not a straight Michael? He at times evokes who Michael is, and adds a new layer of geekiness (no surprise there), but he's just not as uptight as the character demands, and like Quinto, he's too nice. His evolution into a monster is hard to believe. In the film, Emory's intense annoyance provides comic relief when expressed by Cliff Gorman. His anger serves as a weapon against Alan's hypocrisy. In this version, we don't see a really pissed-off Emory. And when you have a softer Michael, Emory and Harold, you lose a giant chunk of that pre-Stonewall pressure-cooker feel.

Hutchison is missing that haunted look the original Alan (Peter White) had, the one that showed how frightened he likely was of his gay feelings. On the positive front, he gives Alan an interesting aggressiveness that one might interpret as a protective mask, so no one thinks he's queer. I was really pleased with Rannells — he's got a gift for physical comedy, and is a more fun Larry than Keith Prentice was. Washington has more charisma than the original Bernard too and plays him in such a way that you feel he has added self-esteem. Bomer, Carver and Watkins sort of fade into the background.

I have a feeling with increased rehearsal time and better direction




photo: john guilty

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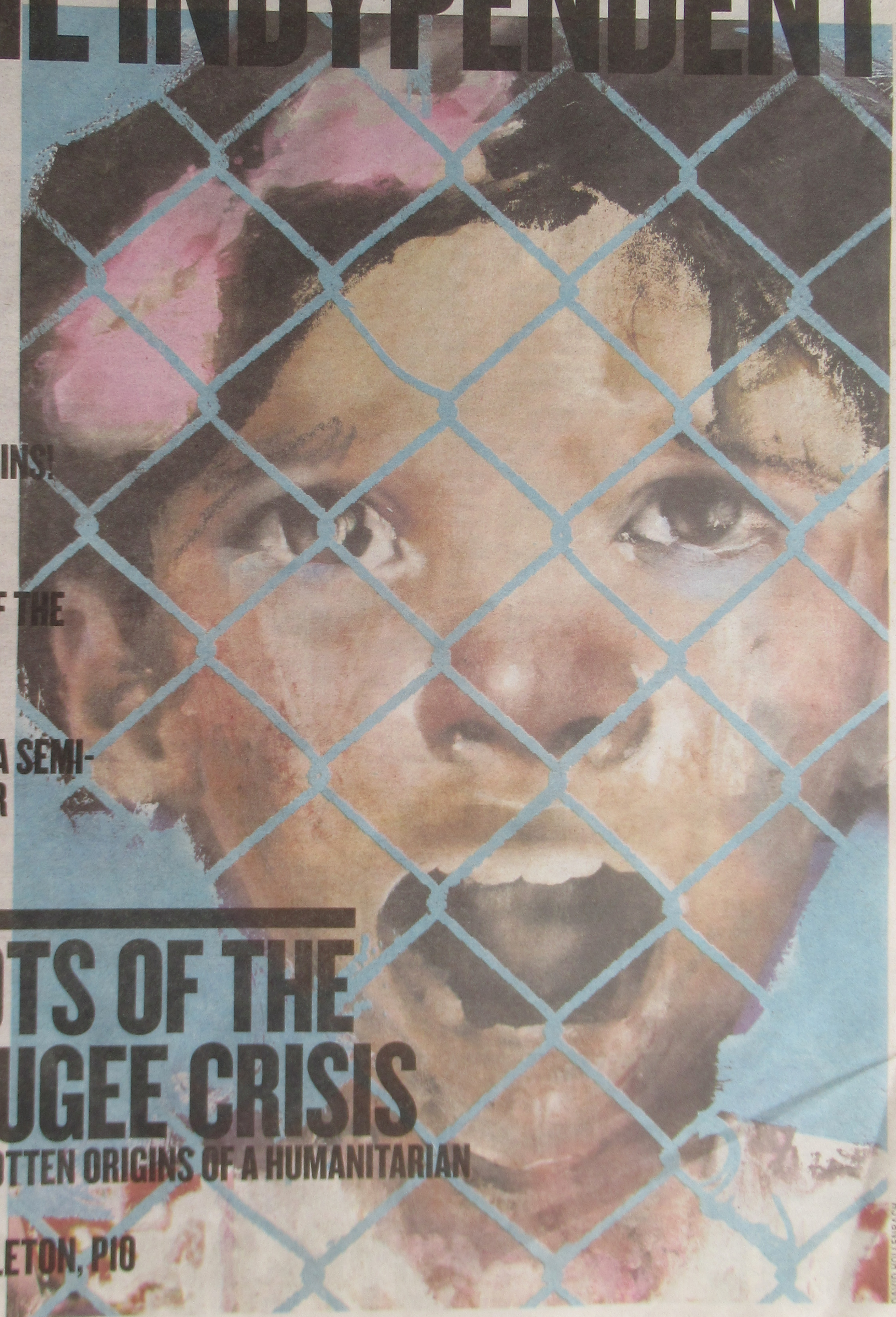
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NEXT UP...
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ROOTS OF THE REFUGEE CRISIS

THE FORGOTTEN ORIGINS OF A HUMANITARIAN
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DAVID HOLLENBACH